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Q. HORATII FLACCI EPISTOLAE AD PISONES, ET AUGUSTUM:

WITH AN ENGLISH

COMMENTARY AND NOTES:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS.

BY THE

REVEREND MR. HURD.

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DISSERTATION III.

ON

POETICAL IMITATION.

I Undertake, in the following diſcourſe, to conſider TWO QUESTIONS, in which the credit of almoſt all great writers, ſince the time of *Homer*, is vitally concerned.

Firſt, "*Whether that conformity in Phraſe* "*or Sentiment between two writers of dif-* "*ferent times, which we call* IMITATION, "*may not with probability enough, for the* "*moſt part, be accounted for from general* "*cauſes, ariſing from our common nature;* "*that is, from the exerciſe of our natural* "*faculties on ſuch objects as lie in common* "*to all obſervers.*"

Secondly, "*Whether, in the caſe of con-* "*feſſed Imitations, any certain and neceſſary* "*concluſion holds to the diſadvantage of the* "*natural* GENIUS *of the imitator?*"— QUESTIONS, which there ſeems no fit me-

thod of reſolving, but by taking the matter pretty deep, and deducing it from its *firſt principles.*

SECTION I.

ALL *Poetry*, to ſpeak with Ariſtotle and the Greek critics (if for ſo plain a point authorities be thought wanting) is, properly, *imitation.* It is, indeed, the nobleſt and moſt extenſive of the mimetic arts; having all creation for its object, and ranging the entire circuit of univerſal being. In this view every wondrous *original*, which ages have gazed at, as the offſpring of creative fancy; and of which poets themſelves, to do honour to their inventions, have feigned, as of the immortal panoply of their heroes, that it came down from heaven, is itſelf but a *copy*, a tranſcript from ſome brighter page of this vaſt volume of the univerſe. Thus all is *derived*; all is *unoriginal.* And the office of genius is but to ſelect the faireſt forms of things, and to preſent them in due *place* and *circumſtance*, and in the richeſt colouring of *expreſſion*, to the imagination. This primary or original *copying*, which in the

ideas of Philoſophy is *Imitation*, is, in the language of Criticiſm, called INVENTION.

Again; of the endleſs variety of theſe *original forms*, which the poet's eye is inceſſantly traverſing, thoſe, which take his attention moſt, his active mimetic faculty prompts him to convert into fair and living *reſemblances*. This magical operation the *divine* philoſopher (whoſe fervid fancy, though it ſometimes obſcures [*a*] his reaſoning, yet never fails to clear and brighten his imagery) excellently illuſtrates by the ſimilitude of a *mirror*; "*which*, ſays "he, *as you turn about and oppoſe to the ſur-* "*rounding world, preſents you inſtantly with* "*a* SUN, STARS, *and* SKIES; *with your* "OWN, *and every* OTHER *living form*; *with* "*the* EARTH, *and its ſeveral appendages* "*of* TREES, PLANTS, *and* FLOWERS [*b*]." Juſt ſo, on whatever ſide the poet turns his imagination, the ſhapes of things immediately imprint themſelves upon it, and a new correſponding creation reflects the old one.

[*a*] Μιλαίνει τι, ſays Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus, ſpeaking of his figurative manner, τὸ σαφὲς καὶ ζόφῳ ἀσὶ παραπλήσιον. [T. ii. p. 204. *Ed. Hudſon.*]

[*b*] PLATO DE REPUB. lib. x.

This ſhadowy ideal world, though unſubſtantial as the *American viſion of ſouls* [c], yet glows with ſuch apparent life, that it becomes, thenceforth, the object of other mirrors, and is itſelf *original* to future reflexions. This ſecondary or derivative image, is that alone which Criticiſm conſiders under the idea of IMITATION.

And here the difficulty, we are about to examine, commences. For the poet, in his quick reſearches through all his ſtores and materials of *beauty*, meeting every where, in his progreſs, theſe *reflected forms*; and deriving from them his ſtock of imagery, as well as from the real ſubſiſting objects of nature, the reader is often at a loſs (for the poet himſelf is not always aware of it) to diſcern the *original* from the *copy*; to know, with certainty, if the *ſentiment* or *image*, preſented to him, be directly taken from the *life*, or be itſelf a lively tranſcript, only, of ſome former copy. And this difficulty is the greater, becauſe the *original*, as well as the *copy*, is always at hand for the poet to turn to, and we can rarely be certain, ſince both were equally in his

[c] Spectator, N° 56.

power,

power, which of the two he choſe to make the object of his own *imitation*. For it is not enough to ſay here, as in the caſe of *reflections*, that the latter is always the weaker, and of courſe betrays itſelf by the degree of faintneſs, which, of neceſſity, attends a *copy*. This, indeed, hath been ſaid by one, to whoſe judgment a peculiar deference is owing. QUICQUID ALTERI SIMILE EST, NECESSE EST MINUS SIT EO, QUOD IMITATUR [*d*]. But it holds only of ſtrict and ſcrupulous *imitations*. And of ſuch alone, I think, it was intended; for the explanation follows, *ut umbra corpore, & imago facie, & actus hiſtrionum veris affectibus*; that is, where the artiſt confines himſelf to the ſingle view of taking a faithful and exact tranſcript. And even this can be allowed only, when the copyiſt is of inferior, or at moſt but of equal, talents. Nay, it is not certainly to be relied upon even *then*; as may appear from what we are told of an inferior painter's [Andrea del Sarto's] copying a portrait of the divine Raphael. The ſtory is well known. But, as an aphoriſm, brought to determine the merits of

[*d*] QUINCTIL. lib. x. c. 11.

imitation, in general, nothing can be falſer or more deluſive. For, 1. Beſides the ſuppoſed *original*, the object itſelf, as was obſerved, is before the poet, and he may catch from thence, and infuſe into his piece, the ſame glow of real life, which animated the *firſt copy*. 2. He may alſo take in circumſtances, omitted or overlooked before in the *common* object, and ſo give new and additional vigour to his imitation. Or, 3. He may poſſeſs a ſtronger and more plaſtic genius, and therefore be enabled to touch, with more force of expreſſion, even thoſe particulars, which he profeſſedly imitates.

On all theſe accounts, the difficulty of diſtinguiſhing betwixt *original*, and *ſecondary*, imitations is apparent. And it is of importance, that this *difficulty* be ſeen in its full light. Becauſe, if the *ſimilarity*, obſerved in two or more writers, may, for the moſt part, and with the higheſt probability, be accounted for from *general principles*, it is ſuperfluous at leaſt, if not unfair, to have recourſe to the *particular* charge of *imitation*.

Now

Now to ſee how far the ſame common principles of nature will go towards effecting the *ſimilarity*, here ſpoken of, it is neceſſary to conſider very diſtinctly,

I. THE MATTER; *and*

II. THE MANNER, *of all poetical imitation.*

I. In all that range of *natural objects*, over which the reſtleſs imagination of the poet expatiates, there is no ſubject of picture or imitation, that is not reducible to one or other of the *three following claſſes.* 1. The *material world, or that vaſt compages of corporeal forms, of which this univerſe is compounded.* 2. *The internal workings and movements of his own mind, under which I comprehend the manners, ſentiments, and paſſions.* 3. *Thoſe internal operations, that are made objective to ſenſe by the outward ſigns of geſture, attitude, or action.* Beſides theſe I know of no ſource, whence the artiſt can derive a ſingle ſentiment or image. There needs no new diſtinction in favour of *Homer's gods, Milton's angels*, or *Shakeſpear's witches*; it being clear, that theſe are only

human characters, diverſified by ſuch attributes and manners, as ſuperſtition, religion, or even wayward fancy, had aſſigned to each.

1. The material univerſe, or what the painters call *ſtill life*, is the *object* of that ſpecies of poetical imitation, we call *deſcriptive*. This beauteous arrangement of natural objects, which arreſts the attention on all ſides, makes a neceſſary and forceable impreſſion on the human mind. We are ſo conſtituted, as to have a quick *perception* of beauty in the *forms*, *combinations*, and *aſpects* of things about us; which the philoſopher may amuſe himſelf in explaining from remote and inſufficient conſiderations; but conſciouſneſs and common feeling will never ſuffer us to doubt of its being entirely *natural*. Accordingly we may obſerve, that it operates univerſally on all men; more eſpecially the young and unexperienced; who are not leſs tranſported by the *novelty*, than *beauty* of material objects. But its impreſſions are ſtrongeſt on thoſe, whom nature hath touched with a ray of that celeſtial fire, which we call true *genius*. Here the workings of this inſtinctive ſenſe are ſo

powerful,

powerful, that, to judge from its effects, one ſhould conclude, it perfectly intranced and bore away the mind, as in a fit of rapture. Whenever the form of natural beauty preſents itſelf, though but caſually, to the mind of the poet; buſied, it may be, and intent on the inveſtigation of quite other objects; his imagination takes fire, and it is with difficulty that he reſtrains himſelf from quitting his proper purſuit, and ſtopping a while to ſurvey and delineate the enchanting image. This is the character of what we call a *luxuriant fancy*, which all the rigour of art can hardly keep down: and we give the higheſt praiſe of judgment to thoſe few, who have been able to diſcipline and confine it within due limits.

I inſiſt the more on this ſtrong *influence of external beauty*, becauſe it leads, I think, to a clear view of the ſubject before us, ſo far as it reſpects *deſcriptive poetry*. Theſe *living forms* are, without any change, preſented to obſervation in every age and country. There needs but opening the eyes, and theſe forms neceſſarily imprint themſelves on the fancy; and the love of *imitation*, which naturally accompanies and keeps

pace

pace with this *ſenſe of beauty* in the poet, is continually urging him to tranſlate them into *deſcription*. Theſe deſcriptions will, indeed, have different degrees of *colouring*, according to the force of genius in the imitator; but the *outlines* are the ſame in all; in the weak, faint ſketches of an ordinary Gothic deſigner, as in the living pictures of *Homer*.

An inſtance will explain my meaning. Amidſt all that diverſity of natural objects, which the poet delights to paint, nothing is ſo *taking* to his imagination, as *rural ſcenery*; which is, always, the *firſt* paſſion of *good* poets, and the *only* one that ſeems, in any degree, to animate and inſpirit *bad* ones. Now let us take a deſcription of ſuch a ſcene; ſuppoſe that which *Aelian* hath left us of the Grecian TEMPE, given from the life and without the heightenings of poetic ornament; and we ſhall ſee how little the imagination of the moſt fanciful poets hath ever done towards improving upon it. *Aelian's* deſcription is given in theſe words.

"The Theſſalian TEMPE is a place, "ſituate between Olympus and Oſſa; which "are

" are mountains of an exceeding great
" height; and look, as if they once had
" been joined, but were afterwards ſepa-
" rated from each other, by ſome god, for
" the ſake of opening in the midſt that
" large plain, which ſtretches in length to
" about five miles, and in breadth a hun-
" dred paces, or, in ſome parts, more.
" Through the middle of this plain runs
" the *Peneus*, into which ſeveral leſſer cur-
" rents empty themſelves, and, by the con-
" fluence of their waters, ſwell it into a ri-
" ver of great ſize. This vale is abundantly
" furniſhed with all manners of *arbours*
" *and reſting places*; not ſuch as the arts of
" human induſtry contrive, but which the
" bounty of ſpontaneous nature, ambitious,
" as it were, to make a ſhew of all her
" beauties, provided for the ſupply of this
" fair reſidence, in the very original ſtruc-
" ture and formation of the place. For
" there is plenty of *ivy* ſhooting forth in it,
" which flouriſhes and grows ſo thick, that,
" like the generous and leafy vine, it crawls
" up the trunks of tall trees, and, twining
" its foliage round their arms and branches,
" becomes almoſt incorporated with them.

" The

" The flowering *ſmilax* [*e*] alſo is there " in great abundance; which, running up " the acclivities of the hills, and ſpreading " the cloſe texture of its leaves and tendrils " on all ſides, perfectly covers and ſhades " them; ſo that no part of the bare rock is " ſeen; but the whole is hung with the ver- " dure of a thick, inwoven herbage, preſent- " ing the moſt agreeable ſpectacle to the " eye. Along the level of the plain, there " are frequent tufts of trees, and long conti- " nued ranges of arching bowers, affording " the moſt grateful ſhelter from the heats of " ſummer; which are further relieved by " the frequent ſtreams of clear and freſh " water, continually winding through it. " The tradition goes, that theſe waters are " peculiarly good for bathing, and have " many other medicinal virtues. In the thic- " kets and buſhes of this dale are number- " leſs *ſinging* birds, every where fluttering " about, whoſe warblings take the ear of " paſſengers, and cheat the labours of their

[*e*] Botaniſts give it the name of *oriental bind-weed*. It is ſaid to be a very rambling plant, which climbs up trees, and riſes to a great height in the Levant, where it particularly flouriſhes.

" way

" way through it. On the banks of the *Pe-*
" *neus*, on either ſide, are diſperſed, irregu-
" larly, thoſe *reſting places*, before ſpoken
" of; while the river itſelf glides through
" the middle of the lawn, with a ſoft and
" quiet lapſe; over-hung with the ſhades of
" trees, planted on its borders, whoſe inter-
" mingled branches keep off the rays of the
" ſun, and furniſh the opportunity of a cool
" and temperate navigation upon it. The
" worſhip of the gods, and the perpetual
" fragrancy of ſacrifices and burning odours,
" further conſecrate the place, &c." [*Var. Hiſt.* lib. III. c. 1.]

Now this picture, which Aelian took from nature, and which any one, if he hath not ſeen the ſeveral parts of it ſubſiſting together, may eaſily compound for himſelf out of that ſtock of rural images which are repoſited in the memory, is, in fact, the ſubſtance of all thoſe luſcious and luxuriant paintings, which poetry hath ever been able to *feign*. For what more is there in the *Elyſiums*, the *Arcadias*, the *Edens*, of antient and modern fame? And the common *object* of all theſe pictures being continually preſent to the eye, what way is there

of

of avoiding the moſt exact agreement of repreſentation in them? or how, from any *ſimilarity* in the materials, of which they are formed, ſhall we infer an *imitation?*

This agreeable ſcenery is, for an obvious reaſon, the moſt frequent object of deſcription. Though ſometimes it chuſes to itſelf a dark and ſombrous imagery; which nature, again, holds out to imitation; or fancy, which hath a wondrous quickneſs and facility in oppoſing its ideas, readily ſuggeſts. We have an inſtance in the picture of that *horrid and deteſted vale* which Tamora deſcribes in TITUS ANDRONICUS. It is a perfect contraſt to Aelian's, and may be called an *Anti-tempe.* Or, to ſee this oppoſition of images in the ſtrongeſt light, the reader may turn to *L'Allegro* and *Il Penſeroſo* of Milton; where he hath artfully made, throughout the two poems, the ſame kind of ſubjects excite the two paſſions of *mirth* and *melancholy.*

When the reader is got into this train, he will eaſily extend the ſame obſervation to other inſtances of *natural deſcription*; and can hardly avoid, after a few trials, coming to this ſhort concluſion, "that of all the

"various

" various delineations in the poets, of the " HEAVENS, in their viciſſitude of times and " ſeaſons; of the EARTH, in its diverſity of " *mountains*, *valleys*, *promontories*, &c.; of " the SEA, under its ſeveral aſpects of *tur-* " *bulence* or *ſerenity*; of the *make* and " *ſtructure* of ANIMALS, &c. it can rarely " be affirmed, that they are *copies* of one " another, but rather the genuine products " of the ſame creating fancy, operating uni- " formly in them all."

Yet, notwithſtanding this *identity* of the ſubject-matter in natural deſcription, there is room enough for true Genius to ſhew itſelf. To omit other conſiderations for the preſent, it will more eſpecially appear in the *manner of Repreſentation*; by which is not meant the language of the poet, but ſimply the *form* under which he chuſes to preſent his imagery to the fancy. The reader will excuſe my adding a word on ſo curious a ſubject, which he will readily apprehend from the following inſtance.

Deſcriptions of the *morning* are very frequent in the poets. But this appearance is known by ſo many attending circumſtances, that there will be room for a conſiderable variety

variety in the pictures of it. It may be deſcribed by thoſe *ſtains of light*, which ſtreak and diverſify the clouds; by the peculiar *colour of the dawn*; by its *irradiations* on the *ſea* or *earth*; on ſome peculiar objects, as *trees*, *hills*, *rivers*, &c. A difference alſo will ariſe from the *ſituation*, in which we ſuppoſe ourſelves; if on the *ſea ſhore*, this *harbinger of day* will ſeem to break forth from the *ocean*; if on the *land*, from the extremity of a large plain, terminated, it may be, by ſome remarkable object, as a *grove*, *mountain*, &c. There are many other *differences*, of which the ſame preciſe *number* will ſcarcely offer itſelf to two poets; or not the *ſame individual* circumſtances; or not *diſpoſed* in the ſame manner. But let the ſame identical circumſtance, ſuppoſe the *breaking or firſt appearance of the dawn*, be taken by different writers, and we may ſtill expect a conſiderable diverſity in their *repreſentation* of it. What we may allow to all poets, is, that they will *imperſonate* the morning. And though this idea of it is *metaphorical*, and ſo belongs to another place, as reſpecting the *manner* of imitation only; yet, when once conſidered

conſidered under this *figure*, the *drawing* of it comes as directly within the province of *deſcription*, as the real *literal* circumſtances themſelves. Now in deſcriptions of the morning under this idea of a *perſon*, the very ſame *attitude*, which is made analogous to the *circumſtance* before ſpecified, and is to ſuggeſt it, will, as I ſaid, be repreſented by different writers very differently. *Homer*, to expreſs *the riſe or appearance of this perſon*, ſpeaks of her *as ſhooting forth from the ocean:*

——ΑΠ ΩΚΕΑΝΟΙΟ ΡΟΑΩΝ
ΩΡΝΤΘ.

Virgil, as riſing from the rocks of Ida.

Jamque jugis ſummae ſurgebat Lucifer Idae,
Ducebatque diem.

Shakeſpeare hath cloſed a fine deſcription of the morning with the ſame *image*, but expreſſed in a very different manner:

——*Look what ſtreaks*
Do lace the ſevering clouds in yonder eaſt:
Night's candles are put out: and JOCUND DAY
STANDS TIPTOE ON THE MISTY MOUNTAINS TOP.

The reader, no doubt, pronounces on firſt ſight, this deſcription to be *original*. But why? There is no part of it, which may not be traced in other poets. The *ſtaining of the clouds*, and *putting out the ſtars*, are circumſtances, that are almoſt conſtantly taken notice of in repreſentations of the morning. And the laſt *image*, which ſtrikes moſt, is not eſſentially different from that of Virgil and Homer. It would expreſs the *attitude* of a perſon impatient, and in act to make his appearance. And this is, plainly, the *image* ſuggeſted by the other two. But the difference lies here. Homer's *expreſſion* of this *impatience* is *general*, ΩΡΝΥΘ. So is Virgil's, and, as the occaſion required, with leſs energy, SURGEBAT. Shakeſpeare's is *particular*: that impatience is ſet before us, and pictured to the eye in the circumſtance of *ſtanding tiptoe*; the attitude of a winged meſſenger, in act to ſhoot away on his errand with eagerneſs and precipitation. Which is a beauty of the ſame kind with that Ariſtotle ſo much admired in the ΡΟΔΟΔΑΚΤΥΛΟΣ of Homer. "This "image, ſays he, is peculiar and ſingularly "proper to ſet the object before our eyes. "Had

"Had the poet ſaid ΦΟΙΝΙΚΟΔΑΚΤΤΛΟΣ,
"the colour had been ſignified too *generally*,
"and ſtill worſe by ΕΡΥΘΡΟΔΑΚΤΤΛΟΣ.
"ΡΟΔΟΔΑΚΤΤΛΟΣ gives the preciſe idea,
"which was wanting [*f*]."

This, it muſt be owned, is one of the ſureſt characteriſtics of real genius. And if we find it generally in a writer, we may almoſt venture to eſteem him *original* without further ſcruple. For the ſhapes and appearances of things are apprehended only in the groſs, by dull minds. They think they *ſee*; but it is as through a miſt, where if they catch but a faint glimpſe of the form before them, it is well. More one is not to look for from their clouded imaginations. And what they thus imperfectly diſcern, it is not poſſible for them to delineate very diſtinctly. Whereas every object ſtands forth in bright ſunſhine to the view of the true poet. Every minute mark and lineament of the contemplated form leaves a correſponding trace on his fancy. And having theſe bright and determinate conceptions of things in his own mind, he finds it

[*f*] ARIST. RHET. lib. iii. c. xi.

no difficulty to convey the livelieſt ideas of them to others. This is what we call *painting* in poetry; by which not only the general natures of things are deſcribed, and their more obvious appearances ſhadowed forth; but every ſingle *property* marked, and the poet's own image ſet in diſtinct *relief* before the view of his reader.

If this glow of imagery, reſulting from clear and bright preceptions in the poet, be not a certain character of *genius*, it will be difficult, I believe, to ſay what is: I mean ſo far as deſcriptive poetry, which we are now conſidering, is concerned. The ſame *general* appearances muſt be copied by all poets; the ſame *particular* circumſtances will frequently occur to all. But to give life and colour to the ſelected circumſtance, and imprint it on the imagination with diſtinctneſs and vivacity, this is the proper office of true genius. An ordinary writer may, by dint of induſtry, and a careful ſtudy of the beſt models, ſometimes ſucceed in this work of *painting*; that is, having ſtolen a ray of celeſtial matter, he may now and then direct it ſo happily, as to animate and enkindle his own earthly lump;

but

but to ſucceed conſtantly in this art of deſcription, to be able, on all occaſions, to exhibit what the Greek Rhetoricians call ΦΑΝΤΑΣΙΑΝ; which is, as Longinus well expreſſes it, when "the poet, from his "own vivid and enthuſiaſtic conception, "ſeems to have the object, he deſcribes, "in actual view, and preſents it, almoſt, "to the eyes of the reader [g];" this can be accompliſhed by nothing leſs, than the genuine plaſtic powers of original creation.

2. If, from this vaſt theatre of *ſenſible and extraneous* beauty, the poet turn his attention to what paſſes *within*, he immediately diſcovers a new world, inviſible indeed and intellectual; but which is equally capable of being repreſented to the internal ſenſe of others. This ariſes from that *ſimilarity of mind*, if I may ſo ſpeak, which, like that of outward *form* and *make*, by the wiſe proviſion of nature, runs through the whole ſpecies. We are all furniſhed with the ſame original *properties and affections*, as with the ſame ſtock of *perceptions and ideas*;

[g] Ὅταν ἃ λέγῃς, ὑπ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ πάθους βλέπειν δοκῇς, καὶ ὑπ' ὄψιν τιθῇς ἀκούσιν. [ΠΕΡ. ΥΨ. § XV.

whence it is, that our intimate conſciouſneſs of what we carry about in ourſelves, becomes, as it were, the interpreter of the poet's thought; and makes us readily enter into all his deſcriptions of the human nature. Theſe deſcriptions are of two kinds; either, 1. ſuch as expreſs that tumult and diſorder of the mind, which we feel in ourſelves from the diſturbance of any natural affection: or, 2. that more quiet ſtate, which gives birth to calmer ſentiments and reflexions. The *former* diviſion takes in all the workings of PASSION. The *latter*, comprehends our MANNERS and SENTIMENTS. Both are equally the objects of poetry; and of poetry only, which triumphs without a rival, in this moſt ſublime and intereſting of all the modes of *imitation*. Painting, we know, can expreſs the *material univerſe*; and, as will be ſeen hereafter, can evidence the internal movements of the ſoul by *ſenſible marks and ſymbols*; but it is poetry alone, which delineates the mind itſelf, and opens the receſſes of the heart to us.

EFFERT ANIMI MOTUS INTERPRETE LINGUA.

Now

Now the poet, as I ſaid, in addreſſing himſelf to this province of his art, hath only to conſult with his own conſcious reflexion. Whatever be the ſituation of the perſons, whom he would make known to us, let him but take counſel of his own heart [*b*], and it will very faithfully ſuggeſt the fitteſt and moſt natural expreſſions of their character. No man can deſcribe of others further than he hath *felt* himſelf. And what he hath thus known from his own *feeling* is ſo conſonant to the experience of all others, that his deſcription muſt needs be *true*; that is, be the very ſame, which a careful attention to ſuch experience muſt have dictated to every other. So that, inſtead of aſking one's ſelf (as an admired antient adviſed to do) on any attempt to excel in compoſition "how this or that celebrated author would have written on the occaſion;" the ſurer way, perhaps, is to in-

[*b*] What is here ſaid of *poetical fiction*, Quinctilian hath applied to *oratorial narration*; the credibility of which will depend on the obſervance of this rule. *Credibilis erit narratio antè omnia, ſi priùs conſuluerimus noſtrum* ANIMUM, *nequid naturae dicamus adverſum.* [L. iv. 2.]

quire of ourſelves "how we have *felt* or "*thought* in ſuch a conjuncture, what *ſen-* "*ſations* or *reflexions* the like circumſtances "have actually excited in us." For the anſwer to theſe queries will undoubtedly ſet us in the direct road of nature and common ſenſe. And, whatever is thus taken from the *life*, will, we may be ſure, affect other minds, in proportion to the vigour of our conception and expreſſion of it. In ſum,

To catch the manners living, as they riſe,

I mean, from our own internal frame and conſtitution, is the ſole way of writing naturally and juſtly of human life. And every ſuch deſcription of *ourſelves* (the great exemplar of *moral imitation*) will be as unavoidably ſimilar to any deſcription copied on the like occaſion, by other poets; as pictures of the *natural world* by different hands, are, and muſt be, to each other, as being all derived from the archetype of one common original.

1. Let us take ſome maſter-piece of a great poet, moſt famed for his original invention, in which he has ſucceſsfully revealed the

the ſecret internal workings of any PASSION. What does he make known of theſe myſterious powers, but what he *feels?* And whence comes the impreſſion, his deſcription makes on others, but from its agreement to their *feelings* [*i*]? To inſtance in the expreſſion of *grief on the murder of children, relations, friends, &c.* a *paſſion*, which poetry hath ever taken a fond pleaſure to paint in all its diſtreſſes, and which our common nature obliges all readers to enter into with an exquiſite ſenſibility. What are the tender touches which moſt affect us on theſe occaſions? Are they not ſuch as theſe: *complaints of untimely death: of unnatural cru-*

[*i*] So the great philoſopher, ὃ γὰρ περὶ ἰδίας συμβαίνει πάθος ψυχὰς ἰσχυρῶς, τοῦτο ἐν πάσαις ὑπάρχει. τῷ δὲ ἧττον διαφέρει, καὶ τῷ μᾶλλον. ΠΟΛΙΤ. Θ. Whence our Hobbes ſeems to have taken his aphoriſm, which he makes the corner-ſtone of his philoſophy, "That "for the ſimilitude of the thoughts and paſſions of "one man to the thoughts and paſſions of another, "whoſoever looketh into himſelf, and conſidereth "what he doth, when he does *think*, *opine*, *reaſon*, "*hope*, *fear*, &c. and upon what grounds; he ſhall "thereby read and know, what are the thoughts "and paſſions of all other men, upon the like occa-"ſions." LEVIATHAN, *Introd. p.* 2. *fol. London.* 1651.

elty

elty in the murderer: imprecations of vengeance: weariness and contempt of life: expostulations with heaven: fond recollections of the virtues and good qualities of the deceased; and of the different expectations, raised by them? These were the dictates of nature to the *father of poets*, when he had to draw the distresses of *Priam's* family, sorrowing for the death of Hector. Yet nothing, it seems, but *servile imitation* could supply his sons, the Greek and Roman poets in after-times, with such pathetic lamentations. It may be so. They were all nourished by his streams. But what shall we say of one, who assuredly never drank at his fountains?

—My heart will burst, and if I speak—
And I will speak, that so my heart may burst.
Butchers and villains, bloody cannibals,
How sweet a plant have ye untimely cropt!
You have no children; butchers, if you had,
The thought of them would have stirr'd up remorse.

The reader, also, may consult that wonderful scene, in which MACDUFF laments the murder of his wife and children. [MACBETH.]

2. It

2. It is not different with the MANNERS; I mean thoſe ſentiments, which mark and diſtinguiſh *characters*. Theſe reſult immediately from the ſuggeſtions of *nature*; which is ſo uniform in her workings, and offers herſelf ſo openly to common inſpection, that nothing but a perverſe and ſtudied affectation can frequently hinder the exacteſt ſimilarity of repreſentation in different writers. This is ſo true, that, from knowing the *general character*, intended to be kept up, we can gueſs, beforehand, how a perſon will act, or what ſentiments he will entertain, on any occaſion. And the critic even ventures to preſcribe, by the authority of rule, the particular properties and attributes, required to ſuſtain it. And no wonder. Every man, as he can make himſelf the *ſubject* of all paſſions, ſo he becomes, in a manner, the *aggregate* of all *characters*. Nature may have inclined him moſt powerfully to one ſet of *manners*; juſt as one *paſſion* is, always, predominant in him. But he finds in himſelf the ſeeds of all others. This conſciouſneſs, as before, furniſhes the characteriſtic ſentiments, which conſtitute the *manners*. And it were full as

ſtrange for two poets, who had taken in hand ſuch a character as that of Achilles, to differ materially in their expreſſion of it; as for two painters, drawing from the ſame object, to avoid a ſtriking conformity in the *deſign* and attitude of their pictures.

Thoſe who are fond of hunting after parallels, might, I doubt not, with great eaſe, confront almoſt every ſentiment, which, in the Greek tragedians, is made expreſſive of particular *characters*, with ſimilar paſſages in other poets; more eſpecially (for I muſt often refer to his authority) in the various living pourtraitures of *Shakeſpeare*. Yet he who, after taking this learned pains, ſhould chuſe to urge ſuch parallels, when found, for proofs of his *imitation of the ancients*, would only run the hazard of being reputed, by men of ſenſe, as poor a critic of human nature, as of his author.

I ſay this with confidence, becauſe I ſay it on a great authority. "Tout eſt dit," ſays an exquiſite writer on the ſubject of *manners*; "et l'on vient trop tard depuis plus "de ſept mille ans qu'il y a des hommes, et "qui penſent. Sur ce qui concerne les "MOEURS, le plus beau et le meilleur eſt "enlevé;

" enlevé; l'on ne fait que glaner après les " anciens, et les habiles d'entre les mo- " dernes [*k*]."

Thus far, indeed, the caſe is almoſt too plain to be diſputed. Strong *affections*, and conſtitutional *characters*, will be allowed to act powerfully and ſteadily upon us. The violence and rapidity of their movements render all diſguiſe impoſſible. And we find ourſelves determined, by a kind of neceſſity, to *think and ſpeak*, in given circumſtances, after much the ſame manner. But what ſhall we ſay of our cooler reaſonings; the *ſentiments*, which the mind, at pleaſure, revolves, and applies, as it ſees fit, to various occaſions? " Fancy and humour, it will be " thought, have ſo great an influence in di- " recting theſe operations of our mental fa- " culties, as to make it altogether incre- " dible, that any remarkable coincidence of " ſentiment, in different perſons, ſhould re- " ſult from them."

To think of reducing the thoughts of man, which are " *more than the ſands, and wider than the ocean*," into claſſes, were,

[*k*] M. DE LA BRUYERE, tom. i. p. 91. Amſt. 1701.

perhaps,

perhaps, a wild attempt. Yet the moſt conſiderable of thoſe, which enter into works of poetry (beſides ſuch as reſult from fixed *characters* or predominant *paſſions*) may be included in the diviſion of, 1. *Religious*, 2. *Moral*, and 3. *Oeconomical* ſentiments; underſtanding by this *laſt* (for I know of no fitter term to expreſs my meaning) all thoſe *reaſonings*, which take their riſe from *particular conjunctures of ordinary life, and are any way relative to our conduct in it.*

1. The apprehenſion of ſome inviſible power, as ſuperintending the univerſe, though not *connate* with the mind, yet, from the experience of all ages, is found inſeparable from the firſt and rudeſt exertions of its powers. And the ſeveral reflexions, which religion derives from this *idea*, are altogether as neceſſary. It is eaſy to conceive, how unavoidably, almoſt, the mind awakened by certain conjunctures of *diſtreſs*, and working on the ground of this original *impreſſion*, turns itſelf to awful views of deity, and ſeeks relief in thoſe ſoothing contemplations of providence, which we find ſo frequent in the *epic* and *tragic* poets. And whoever

whoever ſhall give himſelf the trouble of examining thoſe noble *hymns*, which the *lyric* muſe, in her graveſt humours, chaunted to the popular gods of paganiſm, will hardly find a ſingle trace of a devotional ſentiment, which hath not been common, at all times, to all *religioniſts*. Their *power*, and ſovereign *diſpoſal of all events*; their *care of the good*, and *averſion to the wicked*; the bleſſings, they derive on their *worſhippers*; and the terrors, they infix in the breaſts of the *profane*; they are the uſual topics of their meditations; the ſolemn ſentiments, that conſecrate theſe addreſſes to their local, gentilitial deities. In liſtening to theſe divine ſtrains, every one *feels*, from his own conſciouſneſs, how neceſſary ſuch reflexions are to human nature; more particularly, when to the ſimple apprehenſion of *deity*, a warm *fancy* and ſtrong *affections* join their combined powers, to puſh the mind forward into enthuſiaſtic raptures. All the faculties of the ſoul being then upon the ſtretch, natural ability holds the place, and, in ſome ſort, doth the office, of divine ſuggeſtion. And, bating the impure mixture of their fond and ſenſeleſs *traditions*,

tions, one is not ſurprized to find a ſtrong reſemblance, oftentimes, in point of *ſentiment*, betwixt theſe pagan odes, and the genuine inſpirations of heaven. Let not the reader be ſcandalized at this bold compariſon. It affirms no more, than what the graveſt authors have frequently ſhewn, a manifeſt analogy between the ſacred and prophane poets; and which ſuppoſes only, that heaven, when it infuſes its own light into the breaſts of men, doth not extinguiſh *that*, which nature and reaſon had before kindled up in them. It follows, that either *ſucceeding* poets are not neceſſarily to be accuſed of ſtealing their religious ſentiments from their elder brethren, or that ORPHEUS, HOMER, and CALLIMACHUS, may be as reaſonably charged with plundering the ſacred treaſures of DAVID, and the other Hebrew prophets.

It is much the ſame with the *illuſions* of *corrupt* religion. The *fawns and nymphs* of the ancients, holding their reſidence in ſhadowy groves or caverns, and the frightful ſpectres of their *Larvae:* to which we may oppoſe the modern viſions of *fairies*; and of *ghoſts*, gliding through church-yards,

and

and haunting ſepulchres; together with the vaſt train of gloomy reflexions, which ſo naturally wait upon them, are, as well as the juſter notions of divinity, the genuine offspring of the ſame *common apprehenſions*. Reaſon, when miſled by ſuperſtition, takes a *certain route*, and keeps as ſteadily in it, as when conducted by a ſound and ſober piety. There needs only a previous conception of unſeen *intelligence* for the groundwork; and the timidity of human nature, amidſt the nameleſs terrors, which are every where preſenting themſelves to the ſuſpicious eye of ignorance, eaſily builds upon it the entire fabrick of ſuperſtitious thinking. With the poets all this goes under the common name of RELIGION. For they are concerned only to repreſent the opinions and concluſions, to which the *idea* of divinity leads. And theſe, we now ſee, they derive from their own *experience*, or the received *theology* of the times, of which they write. *Religious ſentiments* being, then, univerſally, either the obvious deductions of human reaſon, in the eaſieſt exerciſe of its powers, or the plain matter of ſimple obſervation, regarding what paſſes before

us in real life, how can they but be the *ſame* in different writers, though perfectly *original*, and holding no correſpondence with each other?

2. And the ſame is true of our *moral*, as *religious* ſentiments. Whole volumes, indeed, have been written to ſhew, that all our commoneſt notices of *right* and *wrong* have been traduced from antient tradition, founded on expreſs ſupernatural communication. With writers of this turn the *gnomae* of paganiſm, even the ſlighteſt moral ſentiments of the moſt original antients, ſpring from this ſource. If any exception were allowed, one ſhould ſuppoſe it would be in favour of the *father of poetry*, whoſe writings all have agreed to ſet up as the very prodigy of human invention. And yet a very learned profeſſor [*l*] (to paſs over many ſlighter Eſſays) hath compiled a large work of Homer's moral *paralleliſms*; that is, ethic ſentences, confronted with ſimilar ones out of ſacred writ. The correſpondency, it ſeems, appeared ſo ſtriking to this learned perſon, that he was in doubt, if

[*l*] Dr. Duport.

this

this great original thinker had not drawn from the fountains of *Siloam*, inſtead of *Caſtalis*. Whereas the whole, which theſe ſtudied collections prove to plain ſenſe, perverted by no bias of falſe zeal or religious prepoſſeſſion, is, that reaſon, or provident nature, has inſcribed the ſame legible characters of *moral* truth on all minds; and that the beauties of the *moral*, as *natural* world lie open to the view of all obſervers. This, if it were not too plain to need inſiſting upon, might be further ſhewn from the *ſimilarity*, which hath conſtantly been obſerved in the *law* and *moral* of all ſtates and countries; as well the uninformed, and far diſtant regions of barbariſm, as thoſe happier climates, on which, from the neighbou.'ood of their ſituation, and the curioſity of 'nquiry, ſome beams of this celeſtial light may be thought to have glanced.

3. For what concerns the claſs of *oeconomical ſentiments*; or ſuch prudential concluſions, as offer themſelves on certain conjunctures of ordinary life, theſe, it is plain, depending very much on the free exerciſe of our reaſoning powers, will be more variable and uncertain, than any other.

When the mind is at leiſure to caſt about and amuſe itſelf with reflexions, which no *characteriſtic quality* dictates, or *affection* extorts, and which ſpring from no preconceived ſyſtem of *moral or religious* opinions, a greater latitude of thinking is allowed; and conſequently any remarkable correſpondency of *ſentiment* affords more room for ſuſpicion of *imitation*. Yet, in any ſuppoſed combination of circumſtances, one train of thought is, generally, moſt obvious, and occurs ſooneſt to the underſtanding; and, it being the office of poetry to preſent the moſt *natural* appearances, one cannot be much ſurprized to find a frequent coincidence of reflexion even here. The firſt page one opens in any writer will furniſh examples. The duke in *Meaſure for Meaſure*, upon hearing ſome petty ſlanders thrown out againſt himſelf, falls into this trite reflexion:

No might nor greatneſs in mortality
Can cenſure 'ſcape: back-wounding calumny
The whiteſt virtue ſtrikes.

Friar Lawrence in *Romeo* and *Juliet*, obſerving the exceſſive raptures of Romeo on

on his marriage, gives way to a ſentiment, naturally ſuggeſted by this circumſtance:

Theſe violent delights have violent ends,
And in their triumph die.

Now what is it, in prejudice to the originality of theſe places, to alledge a hundred or a thouſand paſſages (for ſo many it were, perhaps, not impoſſible to accumulate) analogous to them in the ancient or modern poets? Could any reaſonable critic miſtake theſe genuine workings of the mind for inſtances of *imitation?*

In *Cymbeline*, the obſequies of Imogen are celebrated with a ſong of triumph over the evils of human life, from which death delivers us:

Fear no more the heat o' th' ſun,
Nor the furious winter's rage, &c.

What a temptation this for the paralleliſt to ſhew his reading! yet his incomparable editor obſerves ſlightly upon it: "This is the topic of conſolation, that na-" ture dictates to all men on theſe occaſions. " The ſame farewell we have over the dead

" body in Lucian; ΤΕΚΝΟΝ ΑΘΛΙΟΝ, " ΟΥΚΕΤΙ ΔΙΨΗΣΕΙΣ, ΟΥΚΕΤΙ ΠΕΙΝΗΣΕΙΣ, " &c."

When Valentine in the *Twelfth-night* reports the inconquerable grief of Olivia for the loſs of a brother, the duke obſerves upon it,

O! ſhe that hath a heart of that fine frame
To pay this debt of love but to a brother,
How will ſhe love, when the rich golden ſhaft
Hath kill'd the flock of all affections elſe
That live in her?

It is ſtrange, the critics have never accuſed the poet of ſtealing this ſentiment from Terence, who makes Simo in the *Andrian* reaſon on his ſon's concern for Chryſis in the ſame manner:

Nonnunquam conlacrumabat: placuit tum id mihi.
Sic cogitabam: hic parvae conſuetudinis
Cauſâ hujus mortem tam fert familiariter:
Quid ſi ipſe amâſſet? Quid mihi hic faciet patri?

It were eaſy to multiply examples, but I ſpare the reader. Though nothing may ſeem, at firſt ſight, more inconſtant, variable, and capricious, than the *thought* of man, yet he will eaſily collect, that *character*,

ter, paſſion, ſyſtem, or *circumſtance,* can, each in its turn, by a ſecret yet ſure influence, bind its extravagant ſtarts and ſallies; and effect, at length, as neceſſary a conformity in the repreſentation of theſe *internal movements,* as of the viſible phaenomena of the *natural world.* A poor impoveriſhed ſpirit, who has no ſources of invention in himſelf, may be tempted to relieve his wants at the expence of his wealthier neighbour. But the ſuſpicion, of *real ability,* is childiſh. Common ſenſe directs us, for the moſt part, to regard *reſemblances* in great writers, not as the pilferings, or frugal acquiſitions of needy *art,* but as the honeſt fruits of genius, the free and liberal bounties of unenvying *nature.*

III. Having learned, from our own conſcious reflexion, the ſecret operations of *reaſon, character,* and *paſſion,* it now remains to contemplate their *effects in viſible appearances.* For nature is not more regular and conſiſtent with herſelf in touching the fine and hidden ſprings of humanity, than in ordering the outward and groſſer movements. The thoughts and affections of men paint themſelves on the *countenance*; ſtand forth

in *airs* and *attitudes*; and declare themſelves in all the diverſities of human *action*. This is a new field for mimic genius to range in; a great and glorious one, and which affords the nobleſt and moſt intereſting objects of *imitation*. For the external forms themſelves are grateful to the *fancy*, and, as being expreſſive of *deſign*, warm and agitate the *heart* with paſſion. Hence it is, that narrative poetry, which draws mankind under every *apparent conſequence and effect* of paſſion, inchants the mind. And even the dramatic, we know, is cool and lifeleſs, and loſes half its efficacy, without *action*. This, too, is the province of *picture*, *ſtatuary*, and all arts, which inform by mute ſigns. Nay, the mute arts may be ſtyled, almoſt without a figure, in this claſs of *imitation*, the moſt eloquent. For what words can expreſs *airs and attitudes*, like the pencil? Or, when the genius of the artiſts is equal, who can doubt of giving the preference to that repreſentation, which, ſtriking on the ſight, grows almoſt into reality, and is hardly conſidered by the inraptured thought, as *fiction*? When *paſ-*

ſion

ſion is to be made known by outward *act*, Homer himſelf yields the palm to *Raphael*.

But our buſineſs is with the *poets*. And, in reviewing this their largeſt and moſt favoured ſtock of *materials*, can we do better than contemplate them in the very order, in which we before diſpoſed the *workings* of the mind itſelf, the *cauſes* of theſe appearances?

1. To begin with the *affections*. They have their riſe, as was obſerved, from the very *conſtitution* of human nature, when placed in given circumſtances, and acted upon by certain occurrences. The perceptions of theſe inward commotions are uniformly the ſame, in all; and draw along with them the ſame, or ſimilar *ſentiments and reflexions*. Hence the appeal is made to every one's own *conſciouſneſs*, which declares the truth or falſhood of the *imitation*. When theſe *commotions* are produced and made objective to ſenſe by *viſible ſigns*, is *obſervation* a more fallible guide, than *conſciouſneſs*? Or, doth experience atteſt theſe *ſigns* to be leſs ſimilar and uniform, than their *occaſions*? By no means. Take a man under the impreſſion of *joy*, *fear*, *grief*, or any

any other of the ſtronger affections, and ſee, if a peculiar conformation of feature, ſome certain ſtretch of muſcle, or contortion of limb, will not neceſſarily follow, as the clear and undoubted index of his condition. Our natural curioſity is ever awake and attentive to theſe *changes*. And poetry ſets herſelf at work, with eagerneſs, to catch and tranſcribe their various *appearances*. No correſpondency of repreſentation, then, needs ſurprize us; nor any the exacteſt *reſemblance* be thought ſtrange, where the *object* is equally preſent to all perſons. For it muſt be remarked of the *viſible effects* of MIND, as, before, of the *phaenomena* of the *material world*, that they are, ſimply, the objects of *obſervation*. So that what was concluded of *theſe*, will hold alſo of the *others*; with this difference, that the *effects of internal movements* do not preſent themſelves ſo *conſtantly* to the eye, nor with that *uniformity* of appearance, as *permanent external exiſtencies*. We cannot ſurvey them at *pleaſure*, but as occaſion offers: and we, further, find them diverſified by the *character*, or diſguiſed, in ſome degree, by the *artifice*, of the perſons, in

whom we obſerve them. But all the conſequence is, that, to ſucceed in this work of painting the *ſignatures of internal affection*, requires a larger experience, or quicker penetration, than copying after *ſtill life*. Where the proper qualifications are poſſeſſed, and eſpecially in deſcribing the *marks* of vigorous affections, different writers cannot be ſuppoſed to vary more conſiderably, in *this* province of *imitation*, than in the *other*. Our trouble, therefore, on this head, may ſeem to be at an end. Yet it will be expected, that ſo general a concluſion be inforced by ſome *illuſtrations*.

The paſſion of LOVE is one of thoſe affections, which bear great ſway in the human nature. Its *workings* are violent. And its *effects* on the perſon, poſſeſſed by it, and in the train of events, to which it gives occaſion, conſpicuous to all obſervers. The power of this commanding affection hath triumphed at all times. It hath given birth to ſome of the greateſt and moſt ſignal tranſactions in *hiſtory*; and hath furniſhed the moſt inchanting ſcenes of *fiction*. Poetry hath ever lived by it. The modern muſe hath hardly any exiſtence without it.

Let

Let us aſk, then, of this *tyrant paſſion*, whether its operations are not too familiar to *ſenſe*; its *effects* too viſible to the *eye*, to make it neceſſary for the poet to go beyond himſelf, and the ſphere of his own obſervation, for the *original* of his deſcriptions of it.

To prevent all cavil, let it be allowed, that the *ſigns* of this paſſion, I mean, the viſible effects in which it ſhews itſelf, are various and almoſt infinite. It is reproached, above all others, with the names of *capricious, fantaſtic, and unreaſonable.* No wonder then, if it aſſume an endleſs variety of forms, and ſeem impatient, as it were, of any certain ſhape or poſture. Yet this Proteus of a paſſion may be fixed by the magic hand of the poet. Though it can *occaſionally* take *all*, yet it delights to be ſeen in *ſome* ſhapes, more than others. Some of its *effects* are known and obvious, and are perpetually recurring to obſervation. And theſe are ever fitteſt to the ends of poetry; every man pronouncing of ſuch repreſentations from his proper experience, that they are from *nature.* Nay its very irregularities may be reduced to rule. There is not, in antiquity,

antiquity, a truer picture of this fond and froward paſſion, than is given us in the perſon of Terence's *Phaedria* from Menander. *Horace* and *Perſius*, when they ſet themſelves, on purpoſe, to expoſe and exaggerate its follies, could imagine nothing beyond it. Yet we have much the ſame inconſiſtent character in JULIA in *The two Gentlemen of Verona.*

Shall it be now ſaid, that *Shakeſpeare* copied from Terence, as Terence from Menander? Or is it not as plain to common ſenſe, that the Engliſh poet is *original*, as that the *Latin* poet was an *imitator?*

Shakeſpeare, on another occaſion, deſcribes the various, external ſymptoms of this extravagant affection. Amongſt others, he inſiſts, there is no ſurer ſign of being in love, "*than when every thing about you demonſtrates a careleſs deſolation.*" [*As you like it.* A. iii. Sc. 8.] Suppoſe now the poet to have taken in hand the ſtory of a neglected, abandoned lover; for inſtance of Ariadne; a ſtory, which antient poetry took a pleaſure to relate, and which hath been touched with infinite grace by the tender, paſſionate muſe of Catullus and Ovid. Suppoſe

poſe him to give a pourtrait of her *paſſion* in that diſtreſsful moment when, "*from the* "*naked beach, ſhe views the parting ſail of* "*Theſeus.*" This was a time for all the ſigns of *deſolation* to ſhew themſelves. And could we doubt of his deſcribing thoſe *very ſigns*, which nature's ſelf dictated, long ago, to Catullus?

Non flavo retinens ſubtilem vertice mitram,
Non contexta levi velatum pectus amictu,
Non tereti ſtrophio luctantes vincta papillas;
Omnia quae toto delapſa è corpore paſſim
Ipſius ante pedes fluctus ſalis alludebant.

But there is a higher inſtance in view. The humanity and eaſy elegance of the two Latin poets, juſt mentioned, joined to an unaffected *naiveté* of expreſſion, were, perhaps, moſt proper to deſcribe the petulancies, the caprices, the ſoftneſſes, of this paſſion in common life. To paint its tragic and more awful diſtreſſes, to melt the ſoul into all the ſympathies of ſorrow, is the peculiar character of Virgil's poetry. His talents were, indeed, univerſal. But, I think, we may give it for the characteriſtic of his muſe, that ſhe was, beyond all others, poſ-

ſeſſed

ſeſſed of a ſovereign power of touching the tender paſſions. Euripides' ſelf, whoſe genius was moſt reſembling to his, of all the ancients, holds, perhaps, but the ſecond place in this praiſe.

A poet, thus accompliſhed, would omit, we may be ſure, no occaſion of yielding to his natural bias of recording the diſtreſſes of *love*. He diſcovered his talent, as well as inclination, very early, in the *Bucolics*; and even, where one ſhould leaſt expect it, in his *Georgics*. But the faireſt opportunity offered in his great deſign of the *Aeneis*. Here, one ſhould ſuppoſe, the whole bent of his genius would exert itſelf. And we are not diſappointed. I ſpeak not of that ſucceſſion of *ſentiments, reflexions, and expoſtulations*, which flow, as in a continued ſtream of grief, from the firſt diſcovery of her heart to her ſiſter, to her laſt frantic and inflamed reſentments. Theſe belong to the former article of *internal movements:* and need not be conſidered. My concern, at preſent, is with thoſe *viſible, external indications*, the ſenſible marks and ſignatures (as expreſſed in *look, air*, and *action*) of this tormenting frenzy. The hiſtory of theſe,

theſe, as related in the narrative part of Dido's adventure, would comprehend every natural *ſituation* of a perſon, under *love's* diſtractions. And it were no unpleaſing amuſement to follow and contemplate her, in a ſeries of pictures, from her firſt attitude, of *hanging on the mouth of Aeneas*, through all the gradual exceſſes of her rage, to the concluding fatal *act of deſperation*. But they are deeply imprinted on every ſchoolboy's memory. It need only be obſerved, that they are ſuch, as almoſt neceſſarily ſpring up from the circumſtances of her caſe, and which every reader, on firſt view, as agreeing to his own notices and obſervations, pronounces *natural*.

It may ſeem ſufficient, therefore, to aſcribe theſe pourtraitures of paſſion, ſo ſuitable to all our expectations, and in drawing which the genius of the great poet ſo eminently excelled, to the original hand and deſign of Virgil. But the perverſe humour of criticiſm, occaſioned by this inveterate prejudice "of taking all *reſemblances* for *thefts*," will allow no ſuch thing. Before it will decide of this matter, every ancient writer,

writer, who but incidentally touches a love-adventure, muſt be ſought out and brought in evidence againſt him. And finding that *Homer* hath his Calypſo, and *Euripides* and *Apollonius* their Medea, it adjudges the entire epiſode to be ſtolen by piece-meal, and patched-up out of their writings. I have a learned critic now before me, who roundly aſſerts, "that, but for the Argonautics, "there had been no fourth book of the "Aeneis [*m*]." Some traits of reſemblance there are. It could not be otherwiſe. But all the uſe a candid reader, who comes to his author with the true ſpirit of a critic, will make of them, is to ſhew, "how juſtly "the poet copies nature, which had ſug-"geſted ſimilar repreſentations to his pre-"deceſſors."

What is here concluded of the *ſofter*, cannot but hold more ſtrongly of the *boiſterous* paſſions. Theſe do not ſhelter, and conceal themſelves within the man. It is, particularly, of their nature, to ſtand forth, and ſhew themſelves in *outward actions*. Of

[*m*] JEREMIAS HOELSLINUS, *Prolegom. ad Apollon. Rhodium.*

the more illuſtrious *effects* of the ruder paſſions the chief are *contentions and wars — regum & populorum aeſtus*; which, by reaſon of the grandeur of the ſubject, and its important conſequences, ſo fitted to ſtrike the thought, and fire the affections of the reader, poetry, I mean the higheſt and ſublimeſt ſpecies of it, chuſes principally to deſcribe. In the conduct of ſuch *deſcription*, ſome difference will ariſe from the inſtruments in uſe for annoyance of the enemy, and, in general, the ſtate of *art military*; but the actuating paſſions of *rage*, *ambition*, *emulation*, *thirſt of honour*, *revenge*, &c. are invariably the ſame, and are conſtantly evidenced by the ſame external marks or characters. The *ſhocks of armies*, *ſingle combats*; *the chances and ſingularities of either*; *wounds*, *deaths*, *ſtratagems*, and the other attendants on *battle*, which furniſh out the ſtate and magnificence of the epic muſe, are, all of them, *fixed*, *determinate objects*; which leave their impreſſions on the mind of the poet, in as diſtinct and uniform characters, as the great conſtituent parts of the material univerſe itſelf. He hath only to look abroad into *life and action* for the mo-

del of all ſuch repreſentations. On which account we can rarely be certain, that the *picture* is not from *nature*, though an exact reſemblance give to ſuperficial and unthinking obſervers the ſuſpicion of *art*.

The ſame reaſoning extends to all the *phaenomena* of human life, which are the effects or conſequences of *ſtrong affections*, and which ſet mankind before us in *geſtures*, *looks*, or *actions*, declarative of the inward ſuggeſtions of the heart. It can ſeldom be affirmed with confidence, in ſuch caſes, on the ſcore of any ſimilarity, that one repreſentation *imitates* another; ſince an ordinary attention to the ſame common original, ſufficiently accounts for both. The reader, if he ſees fit, will apply theſe remarks to the *battles*, *games*, *travels*, &c. of a great poet; the ſuppoſed ſterility of whoſe genius hath been charged with ſerving itſelf pretty freely of the copious, inexhauſted ſtores of Homer. In ſum;

Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas, Gaudia, &c.

Whatever be the *actuating paſſion*, it cannot but be thought unfair to ſuſpect the artiſt

of *imitation*; where nothing more is pretended than a *reſemblance* in the draught of *ſimilar effects*, which it is not poſſible to avoid.

2. If this be comprehended, I ſhall need to ſay the leſs of the MANNERS; which are not leſs conſtant in their *effects*, than the PASSIONS. When the *character* of any perſon hath been ſignified, and his ſituation deſcribed, it is not wonderful, that twenty different writers ſhould hit on the ſame *attitudes*, or employ him in the ſame manner. When Mercury is ſent to command the departure of Ulyſſes from Calypſo, our previous acquaintance with the hero's character makes us expect to find him in the preciſe *attitude*, given to him by the poet, "ſitting "in ſolitude on the ſea-ſhore, and caſting a "wiſhful eye towards Ithaca." Or, when, in the Iliad, an embaſſy is diſpatched to treat with the reſentful and vindictive, but brave Achilles, nothing could be more obvious, than to draw the pupil of Chiron in his tent, "ſoothing his angry ſoul with his "harp, and ſinging

"*Th' immortal deeds of heroes and of kings.*"

It

It was the like attention to *nature*, which led Milton to diſpoſe of his fallen angels after the manner, deſcribed in the ſecond book of *Paradiſe loſt*.

To multiply inſtances, when every poet in every page is at hand to furniſh them, were egregious trifling. In all caſes of this ſort, the *known character*, in conjunction with the *circumſtances* of the perſon deſcribed, determines the particular *action* or *employment*, for the moſt part, ſo abſolutely, that it requires ſome induſtry to miſtake it. In ſaying which, I do not forget, what many have, perhaps, been ready to object to me long ſince, "that what is *natural* is not there-"fore of neceſſity *obvious:* All the amazing "flights of Homer's or Shakeſpeare's "fancy are found agreeable to nature, when "contemplated by the capable reader; but "who will ſay, that, therefore, they muſt "have preſented themſelves to the genera-"lity of writers? The office of *judgment* is "one thing; and of *invention*, another."

Properly ſpeaking, what we call *invention* in poetry is, in reſpect of the *matter* of it, ſimply, *obſervation*. And it is in the arrangement, uſe, and application of his *ma-*

terials, not in the inveſtigation of them, that the exerciſe of the poet's genius principally conſiſts. In the caſe of immediate and direct *imagery*, which is the ſubject at preſent, nothing more is requiſite, than to paint truly, what nature preſents to the eye, or, common ſenſe ſuggeſts to the mind of the writer. A vivacity of thought will, indeed, be neceſſary to run over the ſeveral circumſtances of any *appearance*, and a juſt diſcernment will be wanting, out of a number, to ſelect ſuch peculiar circumſtances, as are moſt adapted to ſtrike the imagination. It is not therefore pretended, that the ſame images *muſt* occur to all. Sluggiſh, unactive underſtandings, which ſeldom look abroad into living nature, or, when they do, have not curioſity or vigour enough to direct their attention to the nicer particularities of her beauties, will unavoidably overlook the commoneſt appearances: Or, wanting that juſt perception of what is *beautiful*, which we call *taſte*, will as often miſtake in the *choice* of thoſe circumſtances, which they may have happened to contemplate. But quick, perceptive, intelligent minds (and of ſuch only I can be thought to ſpeak) will

will hardly fail of ſeeing nature in the ſame light, and of noting the ſame diſtinct features and proportions. The ſuperiority of Homer and Shakeſpeare to other poets doth not lie in their diſcovery of *new ſentiments or images*, but in the forceable manner, in which their ſublime genius taught them to convey and impreſs *old ones*.

And to inforce what is here ſaid of the *familiarity* of this claſs of the poet's materials, one may, further, appeal to the caſe of the other *mimetic* arts, which have no aſſiſtance from *narration*. Certain *geſtures*, *looks*, or *attitudes*, are ſo immediately declarative of the *internal actuating cauſes*, that, on the ſlighteſt view of the *picture* or *ſtatue*, we collect the real ſtate of the perſons repreſented. This *figure*, we ſay, ſtrongly expreſſes the paſſion of *grief*; *that*, of *anger*; *that*, of *joy*; and ſo of all the other affections. Or, again, when the particular *paſſion* is characterized, the general temper and diſpoſition, which we call the *manners*, is clearly diſcernible. There is a liberal and graceful air, which diſcovers a fine temperature of the affections, in *one*; a cloſe and ſullen aſpect, declaring a narrow con-

tracted ſelfiſhneſs in *another*. In ſhort, there is ſcarcely any mark or feature of the human mind, any peculiarity of diſpoſition or *character*, which the artiſt does not ſet off and make appear at once, to the view, by ſome certain turn or *conformation* of the outward figure. Now this effect of his *art* would be impoſſible, were it not, that regular and conſtant obſervation hath found ſuch *external ſigns* conſociated with the correſpondent *internal workings*. A *heaven overhung with clouds*, the *toſſing of waves*, and *intermingled flaſhes of lightning*, are not ſurer indications of a *ſtorm*, than the *gloomy face*, *diſtorted limb*, and *indignant eye*, are of the outrage of conflicting *paſſion*. The ſimpleſt ſpectator is capable of obſerving this. And the artiſt deceives himſelf, or would reflect a falſe honour on his art, who ſuſpects there is any myſtery in making ſuch diſcoveries.

It is true, ſome great painters have thought it convenient to explain the deſign of their works by *inſcriptions*. We find this expedient to have been practiſed of old by Polygnotus, as may be gathered from the deſcription given us, of two of his pictures

tures by Pauſanias; and the ſame thing is obſervable of ſome of the beſt modern maſters. But their intention was only to ſignify the names of the principal perſons, and to declare the general ſcope of their pictures. And ſo far this uſage may not be amiſs in large compoſitions, and eſpecially on new or uncommon ſubjects. But ſhould an artiſt borrow the aſſiſtance of words to tell us the meaning of *airs and attitudes*, and to interpret to us the *expreſſion* of each figure, ſuch a piece of intelligence muſt needs be thought very impertinent; ſince they muſt be very unqualified to paſs their judgment on works of this ſort, who had not, from their own obſervation, collected the *viſible ſigns*, uſually attendant on any *character* or *paſſion*; and whom therefore the repreſentation of theſe *ſigns*, would not lead to a certain knowledge of the character or paſſion *intended*.

Nay there is one advantage which *painting* hath, in this reſpect, over *narration*, and even *poetry* itſelf. For though poetry repreſent the *ſame* objects, the *ſame* ſenſible marks of the internal movements, as painting, yet it doth it with leſs *particularity*

and

and exactneſs. My meaning will be underſtood in reflecting, that *words* can only give us, even when moſt expreſſive, the *general* image. The pencil touches its ſmalleſt and minuteſt *ſpecialities.* And this will explain the reaſon why any remarkable correſpondency of *air*, *feature*, *attitude*, &c. in two pictures, will, commonly and with good reaſon, convict one or both of them of *imitation:* whereas this concluſion is by no means ſo certain from a correſpondency of deſcription in two poems. For the odds are prodigious againſt ſuch exactneſs of ſimilitude, when the ſlighteſt trace of the pencil forms a ſenſible difference: But poets, who do not convey ideas with the ſame preciſion and diſtinctneſs, cannot be juſtly liable to this imputation, even where the general image repreſented happens to be the ſame. Virgil, one would think, on a very affecting occaſion, might have given the following repreſentation of his hero,

Multa gemens largoque humectat flumine vultum;

without any ſuſpicion of communicating with Homer, who had ſaid, in like manner, of his,

Ἴσαλο δακρυχέων, ὥστε κρήνη μελάνυδρος.

But

But had two painters, in preſenting this image, agreed in the ſame particularities of *poſture*, *inclination of the head*, *air of the face*, &c. no one could doubt a moment, that the one was ſtolen from the other. Which ſingle obſervation, if attended to, will greatly abate the prejudice, uſually entertained on this ſubject. We think it incredible, amidſt the infinite diverſity of the poet's materials, that any two ſhould accord in the choice of the very *ſame*; more eſpecially when deſcribed with the ſame *circumſtances*. But we forget, that the ſame materials are left in common to *all* poets, and that the very *circumſtances*, alledged, can be, in *words*, but very generally and imperfectly delineated.

3. Of the *calmer ſentiments*, which come within the province of poetry, and, breaking forth into outward act, furniſh matter to deſcription, the moſt remarkable in their operations are thoſe of *religion*. It is certain, that the principal of thoſe rites and ceremonies, of thoſe outward acts of homage, which have prevailed in different ages and countries, and conſtituted the *public religion* of mankind, had their riſe in our common nature,

nature, and were the genuine product of the workings of the human mind [n]. For it is the mere illuſion of this inveterate error concerning *imitation*, in general, which hath miſled ſome great names to imagine them traductive from each other. But the occaſion does not require us to take the matter ſo deep. The office of poetry, in deſcribing the ſolemnity of her religious ritual, is to look no farther, than the eſtabliſhed modes of the age and country, whoſe manners it would repreſent. If theſe ſhould be the ſame at different times in two religions, or the religion itſelf continue unchanged, it neceſſarily follows, that the repreſentations of them by different writers will agree to the minuteſt reſemblance. Not only the general *rite* or *ceremony* will be the ſame; but the very peculiarities of its performance, which are preſcribed by rule, remain unaltered. Thus, if *religious ſentiments* uſually expreſs themſelves, in *all* men, by a certain *poſture of the body*, *direction of the hands*, *turn of the countenance*, &c. theſe *ſigns* are uniformly and faithfully pictured

[n] Div. Leg. vol. ii. par. 1. p. 355. ed. 1741.

in

in all devotional pourtraits. So, again, if by the genius of any *particular* religion, to which the poet is carefully to adhere, the practice of *ſacrifices*, *auguries*, *omens*, *luſtrations*, &c. be required in its eſtabliſhed ceremonial, the draught of this diverſity of *ſuperſtitions*, and of their minuteſt particulars, will have a neceſſary place in any work, profeſſing to delineate ſuch religion; whatever reſemblance its deſcriptions may be foreſeen to have to thoſe of any other.

The reader will proceed to apply theſe remarks, where he ſees fit. For it may ſcarcely ſeem worth while to take notice of the inſinuation, which a polite writer, but no very able critic, hath thrown out againſt the entire uſe of *religious deſcription* in poetry. I ſay the *entire uſe*; for ſo I underſtand him, when he ſays, "the *religion* of "the gentiles had been woven into the con- "texture of all the antient poetry with a "very *agreeable* mixture, which made the "moderns *affect* to give that of Chriſtianity "a place alſo in their poems [*o*]." He ſeems not to have conceived, that the *vi-*

[*o*] Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE's *Works*, vol. i. p. 245. ed. 1740. fol.

ſible

ſible effects of religious opinions and diſpoſitions, conſtitute a principal part of what is moſt ſtriking in the ſublimer poetry. The *narrative ſpecies* delights in, or rather cannot ſubſiſt without, theſe ſolemn pictures of the religious ritual; and the theatre is never more moved, than when its awful ſcenery is exhibited in the *dramatic*. Or, if he meant this cenſure, of the *intervention of ſuperior agents*, and what we call *machinery*, the obſervation (though it be ſeconded by one, whoſe profeſſion ſhould have taught him much better [*p*]) is not more to the purpoſe. For the pomp of the *epic muſe* demands to be furniſhed with a train of theſe celeſtial perſonages. Intending, as ſhe doth, to aſtoniſh the imagination with whatever is moſt auguſt within the compaſs of human thought, it is not poſſible for her to accompliſh this great end, but by the

[*p*] "*La machine du merveilleux, l'intervention d'un "pouvoir céleſte*, la nature des epiſodes, tout ce qui "*depend de la tyrannie de la coutume*, & de cet inſtinct "qui on nomme goût; voilà ſur quoi il y a mille opi-"nions, & *point de régles générales*." M. DE VOLTAIRE, *Eſſaye ſur la Poëſie Epique*, chap. i.

miniſtry

miniſtry of ſupernatural intelligencies, PER AMBAGES ET MINISTERIA DEORUM.

Or, the proof of theſe two points may be given more preciſely thus: "The relation "of man to the deity, being as eſſential to "his nature, as that which he bears to his "fellow-citizens, *religion* becomes as neceſ- "ſary a part of a ſerious and ſublime nar- "ration of human life, as *civil actions*. "And as the ſublime nature of it requires "even *virtues and vices* to be perſonified, "much more is it neceſſary, that *ſupernatu- "ral agency* ſhould bear a part in it. For, "whatever ſome *ſects* may think of reli- "gion's being a divine philoſophy in the "mind, the *poet* muſt exhibit man's addreſſes "to heaven in *ceremonies*, and heaven's in- "tervention by *viſible agency*."

So that the intermixture of religion, in every point of view, is not only *agreeable*, but neceſſary to the very genius of, at leaſt, the higheſt claſs of poetry. Antients and moderns might therefore be led to the diſplay of this *ſacred ſcenery*, without *affectation*. And for what concerns *Chriſtian poets*, in particular, we ſee from an inſtance at home (whatever may be the ſucceſs of ſome Italians,

Italians, whom he appears to have had in his eye) that, where the ſubject is proper to receive it, it can appear with as much *grace*, as in the *poets of paganiſm*. It may be concluded then, univerſally, that *religion* is the proper object of poetry, which wants no prompter of a preceding model to give it an introduction; and that the *forms*, under which it preſents itſelf, are too manifeſt and glaring to obſervation, to eſcape any writer.

The caſe is ſomewhat different with what I call the *moral and oeconomical ſentiments*. Theſe operate indeed *within*, and by their buſy and active powers adminiſter abundant matter to poetic deſcription, which *alone* is equal to theſe *unſeen workings*. For their actings on the body are too feeble to produce any viſible alteration of the outward form. Their fine and delicate movements are to be apprehended only and ſurveyed by conſcious attentive reflexion. They are not, uſually, of force enough to wield the machine of man; to diſcompoſe his frame, or diſtort his feature: and ſo rarely come to be ſuſceptible of *picture* or *repreſentation*. One may compare the ſubtle operations of

theſe

theſe *ſentiments* on the human form, to the gentle breathing of the air on the face of nature. Its ſoft aſpirations may be perceived; its nimble and delicate ſpirit may diffuſe itſelf through *woods* and *fields*, and its pervading influence cheriſh and invigorate all *animal* or *vegetative being*. Yet no external ſigns evidence its *effects* to ſenſe. It acts inviſibly, and therefore no power of imitation can give it *form* and *colouring*. Its impulſes muſt, at leaſt, have a certain degree of ſtrength: it muſt *wave* the graſs, *incline* trees, and *ſcatter* leaves, before the painter can lay hold of it, and draw it into *deſcription*. Juſt ſo it is with our *calmer ſentiments*. They ſeldom ſtir or diſorder the human frame. They ſpring up caſually, and as circumſtances concur, within us; but, as it were, ſink and die away again, like paſſing gales, without leaving any impreſs or mark of violence behind them. In ſhort, when they do not grow out of *fixed characters*, or are prompted by *paſſion*, they do not, I believe, ever make themſelves viſible.

And this obſervation reaches as well to *event and action* in life, as to the *corporal figure* of the perſon in whom they operate.

The ſentiments, here ſpoken of, however naturally or even neceſſarily they may occur to the mind on certain occaſions, yet have ſeldom or never any immediate effect on conſequent action. And the reaſon is, that we do not proceed to *act* on the ſole concluſions of the underſtanding; unleſs ſuch *concluſions*, by frequent meditation, or the co-operating influence of ſome affection, excite a ferment in the mind, and impel the will by *paſſion*. Such moral aphoriſms as theſe, "*that friendſhip is the medicine of life*," and, "*that our country, as including all other* "*intereſts, claims our firſt regard*," though likely to obtrude themſelves upon us on a thouſand occaſions, yet would never have urged Achilles to ſuch a train of action, as makes the ſtriking part of the Iliad; or Ulyſſes, to that which runs through the intire Odyſſey; if a ſtrong, inſtinctive affection in both had not conſpired to produce it. When *produced*, therefore, they are to be conſidered as the genuine conſequences, not of theſe *moral ſentiments*, taken ſimply by themſelves, but of ſtrong benevolence of ſoul, implanted by *nature*, and

and ſtrengthened by *habit*. They are properly then, the reſult of the *manners*, or *paſſions*, which have been already contemplated. Our ſentiments, merely as ſuch, terminate in themſelves, and furniſh no external apparent matter to *deſcription*.

The ſame concluſion would, it muſt be owned, hold of our *religious*, as *moral* ſentiments, were we to regard them only in this view of *diſpaſſionate and cool reflexions*. For ſuch reflexions produce no change of *feature*, no alteration in the *form or countenance*, nor are they neceſſarily followed by any *ſenſible* demonſtration of their power in outward *action*. But then it uſually happens (which ſets the wideſt difference between the two caſes) that the *one*, as reſpecting an *object*, whoſe very *idea* intereſts ſtrongly, and puts all our faculties in motion, are, almoſt of neceſſity, aſſociated with the impelling cauſes of *affection*; and ſo expreſs themſelves in legible ſigns and characters. Whereas the other ſentiments, reſpecting *human nature and its neceſſities*, are frequently no other than a calm indifferent ſurvey of common life, unattended

with any *emotion* or inciting principle of action. Hence *religion*, inſpiriting all its meditations with *enthuſiaſm*, generally ſhews itſelf in *outward ſigns*; whereas we frequently diſcern no traces, as neceſſarily attendant upon *moral*. Which *difference* is worth the noting, were it only for the ſake of ſeeing more diſtinctly the vaſt advantage of *poetry*, above all *other modes of imitation*. For *theſe*, explaining themſelves by the help of *natural media*, which preſent a *real reſemblance*, are able but imperfectly to deſcribe *religious ſentiments*; in as much as they expreſs the *general vague diſpoſition* only, and not the preciſe *ſentiments themſelves*. And in *moral*, they can frequently give us no *image* or repreſentation at all. While *poetry*, which tells its meaning by *artificial ſigns*, conveys diſtinct and clear notices of this claſs of *moral and religious* conceptions, which afford ſuch mighty entertainment to the human mind. But it ſerves to a further purpoſe, more immediately relative to the ſubject of this inquiry. For theſe *ethic and prudential* concluſions, being ſeen to produce no immediate

diate *effect* in look, attitude, or action, we are to regard them only in their remoter and leſs direct conſequences, as influencing, at a diſtance, the civil and oeconomical affairs of life.

And in this view they open a freſh field for *imitation*; not quite ſo ſtriking to the ſpectator, perhaps, but even larger, than *that*, into which religion, with all its multiform ſuperſtitions, before led us. For to theſe *internal workings*, aſſiſted and puſhed forward by the wants and neceſſities of our nature, which ſet the inventive powers on work, are ultimately to be referred that vaſt congeries of *political*, *civil*, *commercial*, and *mechanic* inſtitutions, of thoſe infinite *manufactures*, *arts*, and *exerciſes*, which come in to the relief or embelliſhment of human life. Add to theſe all thoſe nameleſs *events* and *actions*, which, though determined by no fixed *habit*, or leading *affection*, human prudence, providing for its ſecurity or intereſts, in certain circumſtances, naturally projects and preſcribes. Theſe are ample materials for *deſcription*; and the greater poetry neceſſarily compre-

hends a large ſhare of them. Yet in all delineations of this ſort two things are obſervable, 1. That in the *latter*, which are the pure reſult of our reaſonings concerning expediency, *common ſenſe*, in given conjunctures, often leads to the ſame meaſures: As when *Ulyſſes* in Homer diſguiſes himſelf, for the ſake of coming at a more exact information of the ſtate of his family; or, when *Oreſtes* in Sophocles does the ſame, to bring about the cataſtrophe of the *Electra*. 2. In reſpect of the *former* (which is of principal conſideration) the eſtabliſhed modes and practices of life being the proper and only *archetype*, experience and common obſervation cannot fail of pointing, with the greateſt certainty, to them. So that in the *one* caſe different writers *may* concur in treating the *ſame* matter; in the *other*, they *muſt*. But this laſt will bear a little further illuſtration.

The critics on Homer have remarked, with admiration, in him, the almoſt infinite variety of images and pictures, taken from the intire circle of *human arts*. Whatever the wit of man had invented for the ſervice

ſervice or ornament of ſociety in manual exerciſes and operations is found to have a place in his writings. *Rural affairs*, in their ſeveral branches; the *mechanic*, and all the polite arts of *ſculpture*, *painting*, and *architecture*, are occaſionally hinted at in his poems; or, rather, their various imagery, ſo far as they were known and practiſed in thoſe times, is fully and largely diſplayed. Now this, though it ſhew the prodigious extent of his obſervation and diligent curioſity, which could ſearch through all the ſtorehouſes and magazines of *art*, for materials of deſcription, yet is not to be placed to the ſcore of his ſuperior *inventive faculty*; nor infers any thing to the diſadvantage of ſucceeding poets, whoſe ſubjects might oblige them to the ſame deſcriptions; any more than his vaſt acquaintance with *natural ſcenery*, in all its numberleſs appearances, implies a want of *genius* in later imitators, who, if they ventured, at all, into this province, were conſtrained to give us the *ſame unvaried repreſentations*.

The truth, as every one ſees, is, briefly, this. The reſtleſs and inquiſitive mind of man had ſucceeded in the diſcovery or improvement of the numberleſs arts of life. Theſe, for the convenience of method, are conſidered as making a large part of thoſe ſenſible external *effects*, which ſpring from our internal *ſentiments* or *reaſonings*. But, though they ultimately reſpect thoſe *reaſonings*, as their ſource, yet they, in no degree, depend on the actual exertion of them in the breaſt of the poet. He copies only the cuſtoms of the times of which he writes, that is, the ſenſible *effects* themſelves. Theſe are permanent objects, and may, nay *muſt* be the *ſame*, whatever be the ability or genius of the *copier*. In ſhort, taken together, they make up what, in the largeſt ſenſe of the word, we may call, with the painters, *il coſtumè*; which though it be a real excellence ſcrupulouſly to obſerve, yet it requires nothing more than exact obſervation and hiſtorical knowledge of *facts* to do it.

And now having the various objects of *poetical imitation* before us (the greateſt part

part of which, as appears, *muſt*, and the reſt *may*, occur to the obſervation of the poet) we come to this *concluſion*, which, though it may ſtartle the *paralleliſt*, there ſeems no method of eluding, "that of any "ſingle *image* or *ſentiment*, conſidered ſe- "parately and by itſelf, it can never be "affirmed certainly, hardly with any ſhew "of reaſon, merely on account of its agree- "ment in *ſubject-matter* with any other, "that it was copied from it." If there be any foundation of this inference, it muſt then be laid, not in the *matter*, but MANNER of imitation. But here, again, the ſubject branches out into various particulars; which, to be ſeen diſtinctly, will demand a new diviſion, and require us to proceed with leiſure and attention through it.

II.

The ſum of the foregoing *article* is this. The *objects* of imitation, like the *materials* of human knowledge, are a common ſtock, which experience furniſhes to all men. And it is in the *operations* of the mind upon them, that the glory of *poetry*, as of *ſcience*,

ſcience, conſiſts. Here the genius of the *poet* hath room to ſhew itſelf; and from hence alone is the praiſe of *originality* to be aſcertained. The fondeſt admirer of ancient art would never pretend that *Palladio* had copied *Vitruvius*, merely from his working with the ſame materials of *wood*, *ſtone*, or *marble*, which this great maſter had employed before him. But were the general *deſign* of theſe two architects the *ſame* in any buildings; were their choice and arrangement of the ſmaller *members* remarkably ſimilar; were their works conducted in the ſame *ſtyle*, and their ornaments finiſhed in the ſame *taſte*; every one would be apt to pronounce on firſt ſight, that the one was *borrowed* from the other. Even a correſpondency in any *one* of theſe points might create a ſuſpicion. For what likelihood, amidſt an infinite variety of *methods*, which offer themſelves, as to *each* of theſe particulars, that there ſhould be found, without *deſign*, a ſignal concurrence in *any one?* It is then in the *uſage and diſpoſition* of the objects of poetry, that we are to ſeek for proofs and evidences of plagiariſm.

plagiariſm. And yet it may not be every inſtance of ſimilarity, that will ſatisfy here. For the queſtion recurs, "whether of the "ſeveral *forms*, of which his materials are "ſuſceptible, there be nothing in the nature "of things, which determines the artiſt to "prefer a *particular* one to all others." For it is poſſible, that *general principles* may as well account for a *conformity in the manner*, as we have ſeen them do for an *identity of matter*, in works of imitation. And to this queſtion nothing can be replied, till we have taken an accurate ſurvey of this *ſecond diviſion* of our ſubject. Luckily, the alluſion to architecture, juſt touched upon, points to the very method, in which it may be moſt diſtinctly purſued. For here too, the MANNER *of imitation*, if conſidered in its full extent, takes in, 1. *The general plan or diſpoſition of a poem.* 2. *The choice and application of particular ſubjects: and* 3. *The expreſſion.*

1. *All poetry*, as lord Bacon admirably obſerves, "*nihil aliud eſt quam* HISTORIAE "IMITATIO AD PLACITUM." By which is not meant, that the poet is at liberty to conduct

conduct his *imitation* abſolutely in any manner he pleaſes, but with ſuch deviations from the rule of hiſtory, as the *end* of poetry preſcribes. This end is, univerſally, PLEASURE; as *that* of ſimple hiſtory, is, INFORMATION. And from a reſpect to this *end*, together with ſome proper allowance for the diverſity of the *ſubject-matter*, and the *mode of imitation* (I mean whether it be in the way of *recital*, or of action) are the eſſential differences of poetry from mere hiſtory, and the *form or diſpoſition* of its ſeveral *ſpecies*, derived. What theſe *differences* are, and what the *general plan* in the compoſition of *each ſpecies*, will appear from conſidering the *defects* of ſimple hiſtory in reference to the *main end*, which poetry deſigns.

Some of theſe are obſerved by the great perſon, before-mentioned, which I ſhall want no excuſe for giving in his own words.

" 1. Cum res geſtae et eventus, qui " verae hiſtoriae ſubjiciuntur, non ſint ejus " amplitudinis, in quâ anima humana ſibi " ſatisfaciat, praeſto eſt *poëſis*, quae facta " magis heroica confingat. 2. Cum hiſtoria " vera

" vera ſucceſſus rerum minime pro meritis " virtutum & ſcelerum, narret; corrigit " eam *poëſis*, & exitus & fortunas, ſecundum " merita, & ex lege Nemeſeos, exhibet. " 3. Cum hiſtoria vera, obviâ rerum ſatie- " tate & ſimilitudine, animae humanae faſti- " dio ſit; reficit eam poëſis, inexpectata, & " varia & viciſſitudinum plena canens.— " Quare & merito etiam divinitatis cujuſpiam " particeps videri poſſit; quia animum erigit " & in ſublime rapit; *rerum ſimulachra ad* " *animi deſideria accommodando, non animum* " *rebus (quod ratio facit, & hiſtoria) ſub-* " *mittendo* [r]."

Theſe *advantages* chiefly reſpect the *narrative* poetry, and above all, the *Epos*. There are others, ſtill more *general*, and more directly to the purpoſe of this inquiry. For 4. The *hiſtorian* is bound to record *a ſeries of independent events and actions*; and ſo, at once, falls into two *defects*, which make him incapable of affording perfect *pleaſure* to the mind. For 1. The flow of paſſion, produced in us by contemplating *any ſignal event*, is greatly checked and diſ-

[r] De Augm. Scient. lib. ii. c. 13.

turbed

turbed amidſt a *variety and ſucceſſion of actions*. And 2. being obliged to paſs with celerity over *each* tranſaction (for otherwiſe hiſtory would be too tedious for the purpoſe of *information)* he has not time to draw out *ſingle circumſtances* in full light, and impreſs them with all their force on the imagination. *Poetry* remedies theſe two defects. By confining the attention to *one* object only, it gives the fancy and affections fair play: and by bringing forth to view and even magnifying all the *circumſtances* of that *one*, it gives to every ſubject its proper dignity and importance. 5. Laſtly, to ſatisfy the human mind, there muſt not only be an *unity and integrity*, but a ſtrict *connexion and continuity* of the fable or action repreſented. Otherwiſe the mind languiſhes, and the tranſition of the paſſions, which gives the chief pleaſure, is broken and interrupted. The *hiſtorian* fails, alſo, in this. By proceeding in the gradual and orderly ſucceſſion of *time*, the ſeveral incidents, which compoſe the ſtory, are not laid cloſe enough together to content the natural avidity of our expectations. Whilſt *poetry*, neglecting this regularity of ſucceſſion,

ſion, and ſetting out in the midſt of the ſtory, gratifies our inſtinctive impatience, and carries the *affections* along, with the utmoſt rapidity, towards the *event*.

Theſe *advantages* are common both to *narrative* and *dramatic* poetry. But the *drama*, as profeſſing to copy *real life*, contents itſelf with theſe. The reſt belong entirely to the province of *narration*.

Now the *general forms* of poetical method, as diſtinct from *that* of hiſtory, are the pure reſult of our concluſions concerning the expediency and fitneſs of theſe *means*, as conducive to the proper *end* of poetry. Which, without more words, will inform us, how it came to paſs, that the *true plan or diſpoſition of poetical* works, was ſo early hit upon in *practice*, and eſtabliſhed by exact *theories*; and may therefore ſatisfy us of the *neceſſary* reſemblance and uniformity of all productions of this kind, whether their authors had, or had not, been guided by the pole-ſtar of *example*.

So much for the *general forms* of the two greater *kinds* of poetry. If a proper allowance be made for a diverſity of *ſubject-*

matter, in either *mode* of compoſition, it will be eaſy, as I ſaid, to account for the *particular forms* of the ſeveral ſubordinate ſpecies. And I the rather chooſe to do it in this way, and not from the peculiar *end* of each, which indeed were more philoſophical, becauſe the buſineſs is to make appear, how nature leads to the ſame general plan of compoſition in *practice*, not to eſtabliſh the laws of each in the exact way of *theory*. Now in conſidering the matter *hiſtorically*, the diverſity of *ſubject-matter* was doubtleſs *that* which firſt determined the writer to a different *form* of compoſition, though afterwards, a conſideration of the *end*, accompliſhed by *each*, be requiſite to deduce, with more preciſion of method, its diſtinct laws. The *latter* is that from whence the *ſpeculative critic* rightly eſtimates the character of every ſpecies; but the inventor had his direction principally from the *former*.

Let me exemplify the obſervation in an inſtance under either *mode* of imitation, and leave the reſt to the reader.

1. The GEORGIC is a ſpecies of *narration*. But, as *things*, not *perſons*, are its ſubject

ſubject (from which laſt alone the *unity of deſign* and *continuity of action* ariſe) this circumſtance abſolves it from the neceſſity of obſerving any other laws than thoſe of clear and perſpicuous diſpoſition, and of enlivening a matter, naturally unintereſting, by *exquiſite expreſſion* and *pleaſing digreſſions*.

2. The PASTORAL poem may be conſidered as a lower ſpecies of the *Drama*. But, its ſubject being the *humble concerns* of Shepherds, there ſeems no room for a tragic *Plot*; and their characters are too ſimple to afford materials for comic *drawing*. Their *ſcene* is indeed inchanting to the imagination. And, together with this, their little diſtreſſes may ſooth us in a ſhort ſong; or their fancies and humours may entertain us in a ſhort Dialogue. And that this is the proper province of the Paſtoral muſe, we may ſee by the ill ſucceſs of thoſe who have laboured to extend it. Taſſo's project was admired for a time. But we, now, underſtand that paſtoral affairs will not admit a tragic pathos. And the continuance of the paſtoral vein, through five long acts, is

found inſipid, or even diſtaſtful. This poem then has returned to that form which its inventors gave it, and which the *ſubject* ſo naturally preſcribes to it.

II. But, though the *common end* of poetry, which is to *pleaſe by imitation*, together with the ſubjects of its ſeveral ſpecies, may determine the *general plan*, yet is there nothing, it may be ſaid, in the nature of things to fix *the order and connexion of ſingle parts*. And here, it will be owned, is great room for *invention* to ſhew itſelf. The materials of poetry may be put together in ſo many different manners, conſiſtently with the *form* which governs each ſpecies, that nothing but the power of *imitation* can be reaſonably thought to produce *a cloſe and perpetual ſimilarity* in the compoſition of two works. I have ſaid *a cloſe and perpetual ſimilarity*; for it is not every degree of reſemblance that will do here.

The *general plan itſelf* of any poem will occaſion ſome unavoidable conformities in the diſpoſition of its component parts. The *identity* or *ſimilarity* of the ſubject may create others. Or, if no other aſſimilating cauſe

cauſe intervene, the very uniformity of common nature will, of neceſſity, introduce ſome. To explain myſelf as to the laſt of theſe *cauſes*.

The principal conſtituent members of any work, next to the eſſential parts of the *fable*, are EPISODES, DESCRIPTIONS, SIMILIES. By *deſcriptions* I underſtand as well the delineation of *characters* in their *ſpeeches and imputed ſentiments*, as of *places or things* in the draught of their attending circumſtances. Now not only the materials of theſe are common to all poets, but the ſame identical manner of aſſemblage in application of *each* in any poem will, in numberleſs caſes, appear neceſſary.

1. The *epiſode* belongs, principally, to the epic muſe; and the deſign of it is to diverſify and ennoble the narration by *digreſſive*, yet not *unrelated*, ornaments; the *former* circumſtance relieving the *ſimplicity* of the epic fable, while the *other* prevents its *unity* from being violated. Now theſe epiſodical narrations muſt either proceed from the poet himſelf, or be imputed to ſome other who is engaged in the courſe of

the fable; and, in either caſe, muſt help, indirectly at leaſt, to forward it.

If of the *latter* kind, a probable pretext muſt be contrived for their introduction; which can be no other than that of ſatisfying the *curioſity*, or of ſerving to the neceſſary *information*, of ſome other. And in either of theſe ways a ſtriking conformity in the mode of conducting the work is unavoidable.

If the *epiſode* be referred to the *former* claſs, its *manner* of introduction will admit a greater latitude. For it will vary with the ſubjects or occaſions of relating it. Yet we ſhall miſtake, if we believe theſe ſubjects, and conſequently the occaſions connected with them, very numerous. 1. They muſt be of uncommon dignity and ſplendor; otherwiſe nothing can excuſe the going out of the way to inſert them. 2. They muſt have ſome apparent connection with the fable. 3. They muſt further accord to the idea and ſtate of the times, from which the *fable* is taken. Put theſe things together, and ſee if they will not, with probability, account for ſome coincidence *in the choice and applications* of the *direct* epiſode. And admitting

admitting this, the ſimilarity of even *its* conſtituent parts is, alſo, neceſſary.

The genius of Virgil never ſuffers more in the opinion of his critics, than when his *book of games* comes into conſideration and is confronted with Homer's. It is not unpleaſant to obſerve the difficulties an advocate for his fame is put to in this nice point, to ſecure his honour from the imputation of *plagiariſm*. The deſcriptions are accurately examined; and the improvement of a ſingle circumſtance, the addition of an epithet, even the novelty of a metaphor, or varied turn in the expreſſion, is diligently remarked, and urged with triumph, in favour of his invention. Yet all this goes but a little way towards ſtilling the clamour. The entire deſign is manifeſtly taken; nay, particular incidents and circumſtantials are, for the moſt part, the ſame, without variation. What ſhall we ſay, then, to this charge? Shall we, in defiance of truth and fact, endeavour to confute it? Or, if allowed, is there any method of ſupporting the reputation of the poet? I think there is, if prejudice will but ſuſpend its determinations

a few minutes, and afford his advocate a fair hearing.

The epic plan, more eſpecially that of the Aeneïs, naturally comprehends whatever is moſt auguſt in *civil* and *religious* affairs. The ſolemnities of funeral rites, and the feſtivities of public games (which religion had made an eſſential part of them), were, of neceſſity, to be included in a repreſentation of the *latter*. But what *games*? Surely thoſe, which ancient heroiſm vaunted to excell in; thoſe, which the uſage of the times had conſecrated; and which, from the opinion of reverence and dignity entertained of them, were become moſt fit for the pomp of epic deſcription. Further, what *circumſtances* could be noted in theſe ſports? Certainly thoſe, which befell moſt uſually, and were the apteſt to alarm the ſpectator, and make him take an intereſt in them. Theſe, it will be ſaid, are numerous. They are ſo; yet ſuch as are moſt to the poet's purpoſe are, with little or no variation, the ſame. It happened luckily for him, that two of his *games*, on which accordingly he hath exerted all the force of

of his genius, were entirely new. This advantage, the circumſtances of the times afforded him. The *Naumachia* was purely his own. Yet ſo liable are even the beſt and moſt candid judges to be haunted by this ſpectre of *imitation*, that *one*, whom every friend to every human excellence honours, cannot help, on comparing it with the *chariot-race* of Homer, exclaiming in theſe words; "what is the encounter of "Cloanthus and Gyas in the ſtrait be- "tween the rocks, but the ſame with that "of Menelaus and Antilochus in the hollow "way? Had the galley of Serjeſtus been "broken, if the chariot of Eumelus had "not been demoliſhed? Or, Mneſtheus "been caſt from the helm, had not the "other been thrown from his ſeat?" The plain truth is, it was not poſſible, in deſcribing an antient *ſea-fight*, for one, who had even never ſeen Homer, to overlook ſuch uſual and ſtriking particulars, as *the juſtling of ſhips, the breaking of galleys, and loſs of pilots.*

It may appear from this inſtance, with what reaſon a ſimilarity of circumſtance,

in the other games, hath been objected. The *ſubject-matter* admitted not any material variation: I mean, in the hands of ſo judicious a copier of Nature as Virgil. For,

"Homer and Nature were, he found, the ſame."

So that we are not to wonder he kept cloſe to his author, though at the expence of this falſe fame of *Originality*. Nay it appears directly from a remarkable inſtance that, in the caſe before us, He unqueſtionably judged right.

A defect of *natural ability* is not that which the critics have been moſt forward to charge upon *Statius*. A perſon of true taſte, who, in a fanciful way, hath contrived to give us the juſt character of the Latin poets, in aſſigning to this poet the topmoſt ſtation on Parnaſſus, ſufficiently acknowledges the vigour and activity of his genius. Yet, in compoſing his *Thebaïd* (an old ſtory taken from the heroic ages, which obliged him to the celebration of *funeral obſequies* with the attending ſolemnities of *public games*), to avoid the diſhonour of following too

too cloſely on the heels of Homer and Virgil, who had not only taken the ſame *route*, but purſued it in the moſt direct and natural courſe, he reſolved, at all adventures, to keep at due diſtance from them, and to make his way, as well as he could, more *obliquely* to the ſame end. To accompliſh this project, he was forced, though in the deſcription of the ſame individual *games*, to look out for different *circumſtances and events* in them; that ſo the identity of his *ſubject*, which he could not avoid, might, in ſome degree, be atoned for by the diverſity of his *manner* in treating it. It muſt be owned, that great ingenuity as well as induſtry hath been uſed, in executing this deſign. Had it been practicable, the character, juſt given of this poet, makes it credible, he muſt have ſucceeded in it. Yet, ſo impoſſible it is, without deſerting Nature herſelf, to diſſent from her faithful copiers, that the main objection to the ſixth book of the *Thebaïd* hath ariſen from this fruitleſs endeavour of being *original*, where common ſenſe and the reaſon of the thing would not permit

it. "In the particular deſcriptions of each "of theſe games (ſays the great writer, "before quoted, and from whoſe ſentence, "in matters of taſte, there lies no appeal), "*Statius* hath not borrowed from either of "his predeceſſors; *and his poem is ſo much* "*the worſe for it.*"

2. The caſe of DESCRIPTION is ſtill clearer, and, after what has been ſo largely diſcourſed on the *ſubjects* of it, will require but few words. For it muſt have appeared, in conſidering them, that not only the *objects* themſelves are neceſſarily obtruded on the poet, but that the *occaſions* of introducing them are alſo reſtrained by many limitations. If we reflect a little, we ſhall find, that they grow out of the *action* repreſented, which, in the greater poetry, implies a great *ſimilarity*, even when moſt *different*. What, for inſtance, is the purpoſe of *the epic poet*, but to ſhew his hero under the moſt awful and intereſting circumſtances of human life? To this end ſome general deſign is formed. He muſt *war* with Achilles, or *voyage* with Ulyſſes. And, to work up his *fable* to that *magnificence*,

ficence, ΜΕΓΑΛΟΠΡΕΠΕΙΑΝ, which Ariſtotle rightly obſerves to be the characteriſtic of this poem, *heaven* and *hell* muſt alſo be intereſted in the ſucceſs of his enterprize. And what is this, in *effect*, but to own, that the pomp of *epic deſcription*, in its draught of *battles*, with its ſeveral *accidents*, of *ſtorms*, *ſhipwrecks*, &c. *of the intervention of gods*, or *machination of devils*, is, in great meaſure, determined, not only as to the *choice*, but *application* of it, to the poet's hands? And the like concluſion extends to ſtill minuter particularities.

What concerns the delineation of *characters* may ſeem to carry with it more difficulty. Yet, though theſe are infinitely diverſified by diſtinct peculiar lineaments, poetry cannot help falling into the ſame *general* repreſentation. For it is converſant about the *greater characters*; ſuch as demand the imputation of like *manners*, and who are actuated by the ſame governing *paſſions*. To ſet off theſe, *the ſame combination of circumſtances* muſt frequently be imagined; at leaſt ſo *ſimilar*, as to bring on the ſame ſeries of repreſentation. The

piety

piety of *one* hero, and the *love of his country* which characterizes *another*, can only be ſhewn by the influence of the *ruling principle* in each, conſtraining them to neglect inferior conſiderations, and to give up all ſubordinate affections to it. The more prevalent the *affection*, the greater the *ſacrifice*, and the more ſtrongly is the *character* marked. Hence, without doubt, the *Calypſo* of Homer. And need we look farther than the inſtructions of *common nature* for a ſimilar contrivance in a *later* poet? Not to be tedious on a matter which admits no diſpute, the dramatic writings of all times may convince us of *two things*, 1. "*that the actuating paſſions of men are* "*univerſally and invariably the ſame*;" and 2. "*that they expreſs themſelves conſtantly* "*in ſimilar effects.*" Or, one ſingle ſmall volume, *the characters of Theophraſtus*, will ſufficiently do it. And what more is required to juſtify this conſequence, "that "*the deſcriptions of characters*, even in the "moſt original *deſigners*, will reſemble "each other;" and "that the very *con-* "*texture* of a work, deſigned to evidence "them

" them in *action*, will, under the manage-
" ment of different writers, be, frequently,
" much the ſame?" A *concluſion*, which indeed is neither mine nor any novel one, but was long ago inſiſted on by a diſcerning antient, and applied to the comic drama, in theſe words,

—Si perſonis iſdem uti aliis non licet,
Qui magis licet currentis ſervos ſcribere.
Bonas matronas facere, meretrices malas,
Paraſitum edacem, glorioſum militem,
Puerum ſupponi, falli per ſervum ſenem,
AMARE, ODISSE, SUSPICARI?

3. In truth, ſo far as *direct and immediate deſcription* is concerned, the matter is ſo plain, that it will hardly be called into queſtion. The difficulty is, to account for the ſimilarity of *metaphor and* COMPARISON (that is, of *imagery*, which comes in obliquely, and for the purpoſe of illuſtrating ſome other, and, frequently, very remote and diſtinct ſubject) obſervable in all writers. Here it may not ſeem quite ſo eaſy to make out an original claim; for, though deſcriptions of the *ſame object*, when it occurs, muſt needs be ſimilar, yet it remains

to

to ſhew how the ſame object comes, in this caſe, to occur at all. Before an anſwer can be given to this queſtion, it muſt be obſerved, 1. that there is in the mind of man, not only a ſtrong natural love of *imitation*, but of *compariſon*. We are not only fond of *copying* ſingle objects, as they preſent themſelves, but we delight to ſet two objects together, and contemplate their mutual aſpects and appearances. The *pleaſure* we find in this exerciſe of the imagination is the main ſource of that perpetual uſage of *indirect and alluſive imagery* in the writings of the poets; for I need not here conſider the *neceſſity* of the thing, and the unavoidable introduction of ſenſible images into all language. 2. This work of *compariſon* is not gone about by the mind *cauſeleſsly and capriciouſly*. There are certain obvious and ſtriking reſemblances in nature, which the poet is carried neceſſarily to obſerve, and which offer themſelves to him on the ſlighteſt exerciſe and exertion of his *comparing* powers. It may be difficult to explain the cauſes of this eſtabliſhed relationſhip in call caſes; or to ſhew

diſtinctly

diſtinctly what theſe ſecret ties and connexions are, which link the objects of ſenſe together, and draw the imagination thus inſenſibly from one ſubject to another. The moſt obvious and natural is that of *actual ſimilitude*, whether in *ſhape*, *attitude*, *colour*, or *aſpect*. As when *heroes* are compared to *gods*,—*a hero in act to ſtrike at his foe*, to *a faulcon ſtooping at a dove*,—*blood running down the ſkin*, to *the ſtaining of ivory*,—*corn waving with the wind*, to *water in motion*. Sometimes the aſſociating cauſe lies in the *effect*. As when the *return of a good prince to his country* is compared *to the ſun*—a *freſh gale to mariners*, to *the timely coming of a general to his troops*, &c. more commonly, in ſome *property*, *attribute*, or *circumſtance*. Thus an *intrepid* hero ſuggeſts the idea of a *rock*, on account of *its firmneſs and ſtability*;—of *a lion*, for his *fierceneſs*,—*of a deer encompaſſed* with wolves, for his *ſituation when ſurrounded with enemies*. In ſhort, for I pretend not to make a complete enumeration of the *grounds* of connexion, whatever the mind obſerves in any object, that bears

an analogy to ſomething in any other, becomes the *occaſion* of compariſon betwixt them; and the fancy, which is ever, in a great genius, quick at eſpying theſe *traits* of reſemblance, and delights to ſurvey them, lets ſlip no opportunity of ſetting them over-againſt each other, and producing them to obſervation.

But whatever be the *cauſes*, which aſſociate the ideas of the poet, and how fantaſtic ſoever, or even caſual, may ſometimes appear to be the *ground* of ſuch aſſociation; yet, in reſpect of the greater works of genius, there will ſtill be found the moſt exact *uniformity* of alluſion, the ſame ideas and aſpects of things conſtantly admoniſhing the poet of the ſame *reſemblances and relations*. I ſay, in *the greater works of genius*, which muſt be attended to; for the folly of taking *reſemblances* for *imitations*, in this province of *alluſion*, hath ariſen from hence; that the poet is believed to have all art and nature before him, and to be at liberty to fetch his *hints* of ſimilitude and correſpondence from every diſtant and obſcure corner of the univerſe. That is, the

genius

genius of the epic, dramatic, and univerſally of the greater, poetry hath not been comprehended, nor their diſtinct laws and characters diſtinguiſhed from thoſe of an inferior ſpecies.

The *mutual habitudes and relations* (at leaſt what the mind is capable of regarding as *ſuch*), ſubſiſting between thoſe innumerable objects of thought and ſenſe, which make up the entire natural and intellectual world, are indeed infinite; and if the poet be allowed to aſſociate and bring together all thoſe ideas, wherein the ingenuity of the mind can perceive any remote ſign or glimpſe of *reſemblance*, it were truly wonderful, that, in any number of images and alluſions, there ſhould be found a cloſe conformity of them with thoſe of any other writer. But this is far from being the caſe. For 1. the more auguſt poetry diſclaims, as unſuited to its ſtate and dignity, that inquiſitive and anxious diligence, which pries into Nature's retirements, and ſearches through all her ſecret and hidden haunts, to detect a forbidden commerce, and expoſe to light ſome ſtrange

unexpected conjunction of ideas. This quaint combination of remote, unallied imagery, conſtitutes a ſpecies of entertainment, which, for its *novelty*, may amuſe and divert the mind in other compoſitions; but is wholly inconſiſtent with the reſerve and ſolemnity of the *graver* forms. There is too much curioſity of art, too ſollicitous an affectation of *pleaſing*, in theſe ingenious exerciſes of the fancy, to ſuit with the ſimple majeſty of the *epos* or *drama*; which diſclaims to caſt about for forced and tortured alluſions, and aims only to expoſe, in the faireſt light, ſuch as are moſt obvious and natural. And here, by the way, it may be worth obſerving, in honour of a great Poet of the laſt century, I mean Dr. DONNE, that, though agreeably to the turn of his genius, and taſte of his age, he was fonder, than ever poet was, of theſe *ſecret and hidden ways* in his leſſer poetry; yet when he had projected his great work "*On* "*the progreſs of the Soul*" (of which we have only the beginning), his good ſenſe brought him out into the freer *ſpaces* of nature and open day-light.

Largior

Largior hic compos æther, et lumine veſtit
Purpureo: ſolemque ſuum, ſua ſidera norunt.

In this, the Author of GONDIBERT, and another writer of credit, a contemporary of DONNE, Sir FULK GREVIL, were not ſo happy. 2. This work of *indirect imagery* is intended, not ſo much to illuſtrate and enforce the original thought, to which it is applied, as to amuſe and entertain the fancy, by holding up to view, in theſe occaſional digreſſive repreſentations, the pictures of pleaſing ſcenes and objects. But this *end* of alluſion (which is principal in the ſublimer works of genius) reſtrains the poet to the uſe of a few ſelect images, for the moſt part taken from obvious common nature; theſe being always moſt illuſtrious in themſelves, and therefore moſt apt to ſeize and captivate the imagination of the reader. Thus is the poet confined, by the very nature of his work, to a very moderate compaſs of alluſion, on both theſe accounts; *firſt*, as he muſt employ the eaſieſt and moſt apparent reſemblances: and *ſecondly*, of *theſe*, ſuch as impreſs the moſt delightful images on the fancy.

This being the caſe, it cannot but happen, that the alluſions of different poets, of the higher claſs, though writing without any communication with each other, will, of courſe, be much the ſame on ſimilar occaſions. There are fixed and real analogies between different *material objects*; between theſe objects, and the *inward workings* of the mind; and, again, between theſe, and the *external ſigns* of them. Such, on every occaſion, do not ſo properly offer themſelves to the ſearching eye of the poet, as force themſelves upon him; ſo that, if he ſubmit to be guided by the moſt natural views of things, he cannot avoid a very remarkable correſpondence of imagery with his predeceſſors. And we find this concluſion verified in fact; as appears not only from comparing together the great antient and modern writers, who are known to have held an intimate correſpondence with each other, but thoſe who cannot be ſuſpected of this commerce. Several critics, I obſerved, have taken great pains to illuſtrate the ſentiments of Homer from ſimilar inſtances in the ſacred writers. The

ſame

ſame deſign might eaſily be carried on, in reſpect of *alluſive imagery*; it being obvious to common obſervation, that numberleſs of the moſt beautiful *compariſons* in the Greek poet are to be met with in the Hebrew prophets. Nay, the remark may be extended to the undiſciplined writers and ſpeakers of the fartheſt *weſt* and *eaſt*, whom Nature inſtructs to beautify and adorn their conceptions with the ſame imagery. So little doth it argue an inferiority of genius in Virgil, if it be true, as the excellent tranſlator of Homer ſays, "that he has ſcarcely any *compariſons*, "which are not drawn from his maſter."

The truth is, the *nature* of the two ſubjects, which the Greek poet had taken upon himſelf to adorn, was ſuch, that it led him through every circumſtance and ſituation of human life; which his quick attentive obſervation readily found the means of ſhewing to advantage under the cover of the moſt fit and proper imagery. Succeeding writers, who had *not* contemplated his pictures, yet, drawing from one common original, have unknowingly hit upon

the very ſame. And thoſe, who *had*, with all their endeavours after *novelty*, and the utmoſt efforts of genius to ſtrike out original lights, have never been able to ſucceed in their attempts. Our *Milton*, who was moſt ambitious of this fame of *invention*, and whoſe vaſt and univerſal genius could not have miſſed of new *analogies*, had Nature's ſelf been able to furniſh them, is a glaring inſtance to our purpoſe. He was ſo averſe from reſting in the old imagery of Homer, and the other epic poets, that he appears to have taken infinite pains in the inveſtigation of new *alluſions*, which he picked up out of the rubbiſh of every ſilly legend or romance that had come to his knowledge, or extracted from the dry and rugged materials of the ſciences, and even the mechanic arts. Yet, in compariſon of the genuine treaſures of nature, which he found himſelf obliged to make uſe of, in common with other writers, his own proper ſtock of *images*, imported from the regions of *art*, is very poor and ſcanty; and, as might be expected, makes the leaſt agreeable part of his divine work.

What

What is here ſaid of the epic holds, as I hinted, of all the more ſerious kinds of poetry. In works of a lighter caſt, there is greater liberty and a larger field of alluſion permitted to the poet. All the appearances in *art* and *nature*, betwixt which there is any reſemblance, may be employed here to ſurprize and divert the fancy. The further and more remote from vulgar apprehenſion theſe analogies lie, ſo much the fitter for his purpoſe; which is not ſo much to illuſtrate his ideas, as to place them in new and uncommon lights, and entertain the mind by that odd fantaſtic conjunction, or oppoſition of ideas, which we know by the name of *wit*. Nay, the *loweſt*, as well as the leaſt obvious imagery will be, oftentimes, the moſt proper; his view being not to ennoble and raiſe his ſubject by the means of *alluſion*, but to ſink and debaſe it by every art, that hath a tendency to excite the mirth and provoke the ridicule of the reader. Here then we may expect a much more original air, than in the higher deſigns of invention. When all Nature is before the poet, and the genius of

his work allows him to ſeize her, as the ſhepherd did Proteus, in every dirty form, into which ſhe can poſſibly twiſt herſelf, it were, indeed, a wonder, if he ſhould *chance* to coincide, in his imagery, with any other, from whom he had not expreſsly copied. They who are converſant in works of *wit and humour*, more eſpecially of theſe later times, will know this to be the caſe, in *fact*. There is not perhaps a ſingle compariſon in the inimitable TELEMAQUE, which had not, before, been employed by ſome or other of the poets. Can any thing, like this, be ſaid of RABELAIS, BUTLER, MARVEL, SWIFT, &c.?

III. It only remains to conſider the EXPRESSION. And in this are to be found the ſureſt and leaſt equivocal marks of *imitation*. We may regard it in *two* lights; either, 1. as it reſpects the *general* turn or manner of writing, which we call a *ſtyle*; or, 2. the peculiarities of *phraſe and diction*.

1. A *ſtyle* in writing, if not formed in expreſs imitation of ſome certain *model*, is the pure reſult of the diſpoſition of the mind, and takes its character from the predominant

dominant *quality* of the writer. Thus a *ſhort and compact*, and a *diffuſed and flowing* expreſſion are the proper conſequences of certain correſponding characters of the human genius. One has a vigorous comprehenſive conception, and therefore collects his ſenſe into few words. Another, whoſe imagination is more languid, contemplates his objects leiſurely, and ſo diſplays their beauties in a greater compaſs of words, and with more circumſtance and parade of language. A polite and elegant humour delights in the grace of eaſe and perſpicuity. A ſevere and melancholic ſpirit inſpires a forcible, but involved expreſſion. There are many other nicer differences and peculiarities of *manner*, which, though not reducible, perhaps, to general heads, the critic of true taſte eaſily underſtands.

2. As men of different tempers and diſpoſitions aſſume a different caſt of expreſſion, ſo may the ſame obſervation be applied, ſtill more *generally*, to different *countries and times*. It may be difficult to explain the *efficient cauſes* of this diverſity, which

which I have no concern with at preſent. The *fact* is, that the eloquence of the *eaſtern* world has, at all times, been of another ſtrain from that of the *weſtern*. And, alſo, in the ſeveral provinces of *each*, there has been ſome peculiar *note* of variation. The *Aſiatic*, of old, had its proper ſtamp, which diſtinguiſhed it from the *Attic*; juſt as the *Italian*, *French*, and *Spaniſh* wits have, each, their ſeveral characteriſtic manners of expreſſion.

A different ſtate of *times* has produced the like effect; which a late writer accounts for, not unaptly, from what he calls a *progreſſion of life and manners*. That which cannot be diſputed is, that the *modes* of writing undergo a perpetual change or variation in every country. And it is further obſervable, that theſe *changes* in one country, under ſimilar circumſtances, have a ſignal correſpondence to thoſe, which the inceſſant rotation of taſte brings about in every other.

Of near affinity to this laſt conſideration is *another*, ariſing from the *correſponding genius* of two people, however remote from each

each other in time and place. And, as it happens, the application may be made directly to ourſelves in a very important inſtance. "Languages, ſays one, always take "their character from the genius of a peo- "ple. So that two the moſt diſtant ſtates, "thinking and acting with the ſame gene- "rous love of mankind, muſt needs have "very near the ſame combinations of ideas. "—And it is our boaſt, that in this con- "formity we approach the neareſt to an- "tient Greece and Italy." I quote theſe words from a tract [s], which the author perhaps may conſider with the ſame neglect, as Cicero did his earlier compoſitions on *Rhetoric*; but which the curious will regard with reverence, as a fine eſſay of his genius, and a prelude to the great things he was afterwards ſeen capable of producing. But to come to the uſe we may make of this fine obſervation. The correſponding ſtate of the Engliſh and Roman people has produced very near the ſame *combinations of ideas*. May we not carry

[s] *A Critical and Philoſophical Inquiry into the cauſes of prodigies and miracles*, &c. p. 130.

the

the concluſion ſtill further on the ſame principle, that it produced very near the ſame *combinations of words?* The fact is, as the ſame writer obſerves, That "we "have a language that is brief, compre-"henſive, nervous, and majeſtic:" The very character which an old Roman would give us of his own language. And when the ſame general character of language prevails, is it any thing ſtrange that the different modifications of it, or *peculiar ſtyles*, ariſing from the various turns and diſpoſitions of writers (which, too, in ſuch circumſtances will be correſponding) ſhould therefore be very ſimilar in the productions of the two ſtates? Or, in other words, can we wonder that ſome of our beſt writers bear a nearer reſemblance, I mean independently of direct imitation, to the Latin claſſics, than thoſe of any other people in modern times?

But let it ſuffice to leave theſe remarks without further comment or explanation.

The uſe the diſcerning reader will make of them, is, that if different writers agree in the ſame *general diſpoſition*, or in the ſame *national*

natianal character; live together in the *ſame period of time*; or in correſponding periods of the *progreſſion of manners*, or are under the influence of a correſponding genius of *policy and government*; in every of theſe caſes, ſome *conſiderable ſimilarity* of expreſſion may be occaſioned by the agency of *general principles*, without any ſuſpicion of ſtudied or deſigned *imitation*.

11. An *identity of phraſe and diction* is a much ſurer note of *plagiariſm*. For conſidering the vaſt variety of *words*, which any language, and eſpecially the more copious ones furniſh, and the infinite poſſible combinations of them into all the forms of *phraſeology*, it would be very ſtrange, if two perſons ſhould hit on the ſame identical *terms*, and much more ſhould they agree in the ſame preciſe arrangement of them in whole ſentences.

There is no defending *coincidences* of this kind; and, whatever writers themſelves may pretend, or their friends for them, no one can doubt a moment of ſuch *identity* being a clear and deciſive proof of *imitation*.

Yet

Yet this muſt be underſtood with ſome limitations.

For 1. There are in every language ſome current and authorized forms of ſpeech, which can hardly be avoided by a writer without affectation. They are ſuch as expreſs the moſt obvious ſentiments, and which the ordinary occaſions of life are perpetually obtruding on us. Now theſe, as by common agreement, we chuſe to deliver to one another in the ſame *form* of words. Convenience dictates this to one ſet of writers, and politeneſs renders it ſacred in another. Thus it will be true of certain *phraſes* (as, univerſally, of the *words*, in any language), that they are left in common to all writers; and can be claimed as matter of *property*, by none. Not that ſuch phraſeology will be frequent in nobler compoſitions, as the familiarity of its uſage takes from their natural reſerve and dignity. Yet on certain *occaſions*, which juſtify this negligence, or in certain *authors*, who are not over ſollicitous about theſe indecorums, we may expect to meet with it. Hamlet ſays of his father,

He

He was a man, take him for all in all;
I ſhall not look upon his like again.

which may be ſuſpected of being ſtolen from Sophocles, who has the following paſſage in the TRACHINIAE:

Πάντων ἄριστον ἄνδρα τῶν ἐπὶ χθονὶ
Κτείνασ', ΟΠΟΙΟΝ ΑΛΛΟΝ ΟΥΚ ΟΨΕΙ ΠΟΤΕ.
ver. 824.

The ſentiment being one of the commoneſt, that offers itſelf to the mind, the ſole ground of ſuſpicion muſt lie in the *expreſſion*, "*I ſhall not look upon his like* "*again*," to which the Greek ſo exactly anſwers. But theſe were the ordinary expreſſions of ſuch ſentiment, in the two languages; and neither the characters of the great poets, nor the ſituation of the ſpeakers, would ſuffer the *affectation* of departing from common uſage.

What is here ſaid of the *ſituation of the ſpeakers* reminds me of another *claſs* of expreſſions, which will often be *ſimilar* in all poets. *Nature*, under the *ſame* conjunctures, gives birth to the *ſame* conceptions; and

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and if they be of ſuch a kind, as to exclude all thought of artifice, and the tricks of eloquence (as on occaſions of deep anxiety and diſtreſs), they run, of themſelves, into the *ſame* form of expreſſion. The wretched Priam, in his lamentation of Hector, lets drop the following words:

ἔ μ' ἄχος ὀξὺ καλοίσιλα ἄϊδος εἴσω.

"This line, ſays his tranſlator, is particu-
"larly tender, and almoſt word for word
"the ſame with that of the Patriarch *Jacob*;
"who, upon a like occaſion, breaks out in
"the ſame complaint, and tells his children,
"that, if they deprive him of his ſon *Ben-*
"*jamin, they will bring down his grey hairs*
"*with ſorrow to the grave.*"

We may further except, under this head, certain privileged forms of ſpeech, which the peculiar idioms of *different* languages make neceſſary in them, and which poetry conſecrates in *all*. But this is eaſily obſerved, and its effect is not very conſiderable.

2. In

2. In pleading this *identity of expreſſion*, regard muſt be had to the *language* from which the *theft* is ſuppoſed to be made. If from the *ſame* language (ſetting aſide the exceptions juſt mentioned), *the ſame arrangement of the ſame words* is admitted as a certain argument of *plagiariſm:* nay, leſs than this will do in ſome inſtances, as where the *imitated expreſſion* is pretty *ſingular*, or ſo remarkable, on any account, as to be *well known*, &c. But, if from *another* language, the matter is not ſo eaſy. It can rarely happen, indeed, but by deſign, that there ſhould be the *ſame order or compoſition* of words in two languages. But that which paſſes even for *literal tranſlation* is but *a ſimilar compoſition of correſponding words.* And what does this imply, but that the writers conceived of their *object* in the ſame *manner*, and had occaſion to ſet it in the ſame light? an occaſion, which is perpetually recurring to all authors; as may be gathered from that frequent and ſtrong reſemblance in the *expreſſion* of moral ſentiments, obſervable in the writers of every age and country. Can there be a com-

moner reflexion, or which more conſtantly occurs to the mind under the ſame appearance, than *that* of our great poet, who, ſpeaking of the ſtate after death, calls it

That undiſcovered country, from whoſe bourn
No traveller returns!

Shall we call this a tranſlation of the Latin poet;

Nunc it per iter tenebricoſum
Illuc, unde negant redire quenquam!
CATUL. III. 11.

Or, doth it amount to any more than this, that the terms employed by the two writers in expreſſing the ſame obvious thought are *correſpondent?* But *correſpondency* and *identity* are different things. The *latter* is only where the words are *numerically* the ſame, which can only happen in one and the ſame language: the other is effected by *different ſets of words*, which are numerous in every language, and are therefore no convincing proof (abſtractedly from other circumſtances) of *imitation*.

From theſe general reflexions on *language*, without refining too far, or prying too

too curiouſly into the myſteries of it, the ſame concluſion meets us as before. The *expreſſion* of two writers may be *ſimilar*, and ſometimes even *identical*, and yet be *original* in both. Which ſhews the neceſſity there was to lead the reader through this long inveſtigation of the general ſources of *ſimilitude* in works of INVENTION, in order to put him into a condition of judging truly and equitably of thoſe of IMITATION. For if *ſimilarity*, even in this province of *words*, which the reaſon of the thing ſhews to be moſt free from the conſtraint of general rules, be no argument of *theft* in all caſes; much leſs can it be pretended of the other *ſubjects* of this inquiry, which from the neceſſary uniformity of *Nature* in all her appearances, and of *common ſenſe* in its operations upon them, muſt give frequent and unavoidable occaſion to ſuch *ſimilarity*. But then this is all I would inſinuate.

For, after the proper allowances which candid criticiſm requires to be made on this head, it will ſtill be true (and nothing in this Eſſay attempts to contradict it), "that "coincidencies of a certain *kind*, and in a

" certain *degree*, cannot fail to convict a " writer of *imitation*." What theſe *are*, the impatient reader, I ſuppoſe, is ready to enquire. And, not entirely to diſappoint him, I have thrown together, at the cloſe of this volume, ſome remarks which, perhaps, will be of uſe in ſolving that difficult queſtion [*t*]. In the mean time, it ſeemed of importance to free the mind from the perverſion of that early prejudice, which is ſo prompt to miſtake *reſemblance* univerſally for *imitation*. And what other method of effecting this, than by taking a view of the extent and influence of the genuine powers of *nature*, which, when rightly apprehended, make it an eaſier taſk to detect, in particular inſtances, the intervention of *deſign*?

Allowing then (what this previous inquiry not only no way contradicts, but even aſſiſts us in perceiving more clearly) that certain *reſemblances* may be urged as undoubted proofs of *imitation*; it remains only to the integrity of this diſcourſe, to ſatisfy that other queſtion, " *how far the credit of*

[*t*] Letter to Mr. MASON.

" *the*

" *the imitator is concerned in the diſcovery?*" or, in other words (ſince the praiſe of *invention* is of the higheſt value to the poet), " how far the conceſſion of his having bor-" rowed from others may be juſtly thought " to detract from him in that reſpect?" An *inquiry* which, though, for its conſequences to the fame of all great writers ſince the time of Homer, of much importance, may yet be diſpatched in few words.

SECTION II.

IN entering on this apology for *profeſſed imitators*, I ſhall not be ſuſpected of undervaluing the proper merits of *invention*, which unqueſtionably holds the firſt place in the virtues of a poet, and is that power, which, of all others, enables him to give the higheſt entertainment to the reader. Much leſs will it be thought, that I am here pleading the cauſe of thoſe baſe and abject ſpirits, who have not the courage or ability to attempt any thing of themſelves, and can barely make a ſhift, as a great poet of our own expreſſes it, *to creep ſervilely after the ſenſe of* ſome other. Theſe

I readily reſign to the ſhame and cenſure which have ſo juſtly followed them in all ages; as ſubſcribing to the truth of that remark, "*Imitatio per ſe ipſa non ſufficit*, "vel *quia pigri eſt ingenii, contentum eſſe* "*iis quae ſunt ab aliis inventa.*" My concern is only with thoſe whoſe talent of original genius is not diſputed, but the *degree* of ſtrength and vigour, with which it prevails in them, ſomewhat lowered in the general eſtimation, from this imputed crime of PLAGIARISM. And, with reſpect to ſuch as theſe, ſomething, I conceive, may be ſaid not undeſerving the notice of the candid reader.

1. The moſt univerſal cauſe, inducing *imitation* in great writers, is, the force of early *diſcipline and education*. Were it true, that poets took their *deſcriptions and images* immediately from common nature, one might expect, indeed, a general *ſimilitude* in their works, but ſuch as could ſeldom or never, in all its circumſtances, amount to a ſtrict and rigorous correſpondency. The *properties* of things are ſo numerous, and the *lights* in which they ſhew themſelves to a mind uninfluenced by former

former prejudices ſo different, that ſome grace of novelty, ſome tincture of original beauty, would conſtantly infuſe itſelf into all their delineations. But the caſe is far otherwiſe. Strong as the bent of the imagination may be to contemplate living forms, and to gaze with delight on this grand theatre of *nature*; its attention is ſoon taken off, and arreſted, on all ſides, by thoſe infinite mirrors, and reflexions of things, which it every where meets with in the world of *imitation*. We are habituated to a ſurvey of this *ſecondary and derivative nature*, as preſented in the admired works of *art*, through the entire courſe of our education. The writings of the beſt poets are put into our hands, to inſtruct us in the knowledge of *men and things*, as ſoon as we are capable of apprehending them. Nay, we are taught to liſp their very *words* in our tendereſt infancy. Some quick and tranſient glances we cannot chuſe but caſt, at times, on the phænomena of living beauty; but its forms are rarely contemplated by us with diligence but in theſe *mirrors*, which are the conſtant furniture of our ſchools and cloſets. And no wonder,

were we even left to ourſelves, that ſuch ſhould be our *proper* choice and determination. For, by the prodigious and almoſt magical operations of *fancy* on original objects, they even ſhew fairer, and are made to look more attractive, in theſe artificial repreſentations, than in their own rude and native aſpects. Thus, by the united powers of *diſcipline* and *inclination*, we are almoſt neceſſitated to *ſee* Nature in the ſame *light*, and to know her only in the *dreſs* in which her happier ſuitors and favourites firſt gave her to obſervation.

The effect of this early bias of the mind, which inſenſibly grows into the inveteracy of habit, needs not be inſiſted on. When the poet, thus tutored in the works of *imitation*, comes to addreſs himſelf to *invention*, theſe familiar images, which he hath ſo often and ſo fondly admired, immediately ſtep in and intercept his obſervation of their great *original*. Or, if he has power to hold them off, and turn his eye directly on the *primary object*, he ſtill inclines to view it only on that ſide and in thoſe *lights* in which he has been accuſtomed to ſtudy it.

Nor

Nor let it be ſaid, that this is the *infirmity* only of weak minds. It belongs to our very natures, and the utmoſt vigour of genius is no ſecurity againſt it. *Cuſtom*, in this as in every thing elſe, moulds, at pleaſure, the ſoft and ductile matter of a *minute* ſpirit, and by degrees can even bend the elaſtic metal of the *greateſt*.

And, if the force of habit can thus determine a writer knowingly to *imitation*; it cannot be thought ſtrange, that it ſhould frequently carry him into *reſemblance*, when himſelf perhaps is not aware of it. Great readers, who have their memories fraught with the ſtores of ancient and modern poetry, unavoidably employ the *ſentiments*, and ſometimes the very *words*, of other writers, without any diſtinct remembrance of them, or ſo much as the ſuſpicion of having ſeen them. At the leaſt, their general caſt of thinking or turn of expreſſion will be much affected by them. For the moſt original writer as certainly takes a *tincture* from the authors in which he has been moſt converſant; as water, from the beds of earths or minerals it hath happened to run over.

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Eſpecially ſuch authors, as are ſtudied and even got by heart by us in our early youth, leave a laſting impreſſion, which is hardly ever effaced out of the mind. Hence a certain conſtrained and unoriginal air, in ſome degree or other, in every genius thoroughly diſciplined by a *courſe of learned education*. Which, by the way, leads to a queſtion, not very abſurd in itſelf, however it may paſs with moſt readers for paradoxical, viz. "*Whether the uſual forms of learning* "*be not rather injurious to the true poet*, "*than really aſſiſting to him?*" It ſhould ſeem to be ſo for a *natural reaſon*. For the faculty of *invention*, as all our other powers, is much improved and ſtrengthened by exerciſe. And great reading prevents this, by demanding the perpetual exerciſe of the *memory*. Thus the mind becomes not only indiſpoſed, but, for want of uſe, really unqualified, to turn itſelf to other views than ſuch as habitual recollection eaſily preſents to it. And this, I am perſuaded, hath been the caſe with many a fine genius, and eſpecially with *one* of our own country [*u*];

[*u*] Mr. Addiſon,

who,

who, as appears from ſome original efforts in the ſublime allegorical way, had no want of natural talents for the greater poetry; which yet were ſo reſtrained and diſabled by his conſtant and ſuperſtitious ſtudy of the old claſſics, that he was, in fact, but a very ordinary poet.

2. But were early *habit* of leſs power to incline the mind to *imitation* than it really is, yet the high hand of *authority* would compel it. For the firſt originals in the ſeveral ſpecies of poetry, like the Autocthones of old, were deemed to have come into the world by a kind of miracle. They were perfect prodigies, at leaſt reputed ſo by the admiring multitude, from their firſt appearance. So that their authority, in a ſhort time, became ſacred; and ſucceeding writers were obliged, at the hazard of their fame, and as they dreaded the charge of a preſumptuous and *prophane libertiniſm* in poetry, to take them for their guides and models. Which is ſaid even without the licence of a figure; at leaſt of *one* of them; whom Cicero calls *the fountain and origin of all* DIVINE *inſtitutions*

tutions [w]; and another, of elder and more reverend eſtimation, pronounces to be ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῶν προφήτης [x].

And what is here obſerved of the *influence* of theſe maſter ſpirits, whom the admiration of antiquity hath placed at the head of the poetic world, will, with ſome allowance, hold alſo of *that* of later, though leſs original, writers, whoſe uncommon merits have given them a diſtinguiſhed rank in it.

3. *Next* (as it uſually comes to paſs in other inſtances), what was, at firſt, impoſed by the rigour of *authority*, ſoon grew reſpectable in *itſelf*, and was choſen for its own ſake as a *virtue* which deſerved no ſmall commendation. For, when ſober and enlightened criticiſm began to inſpect, at leiſure, theſe miracles of early invention, it preſently acknowledged them for the *beſt*, as well as the moſt *antient*, poetic models; and accordingly recommended, or more properly enjoined them by rule, to the imitation of all ages. The effect of this criti-

[w] *Somn. Scip.* ii. c. 10.
[x] PLATO, *Alcibiad.*

ciſm

ciſm was clearly ſeen in the works of all ſucceeding poets in the *ſame* language. But, when a new and different one was to be furniſhed with freſh *models*, it became much more conſpicuous. For, beſides the ſame or a ſtill higher veneration of their *inventions*, which the diſtance of place and time inſenſibly procured to them, the grace of *novelty*, which they would appear to have in another *language*, was, now, a further inducement to copy them. Hence we find it to be the utmoſt pride of the *Roman* writers, ſuch I mean as came the neareſt to them in the divinity of their genius, to follow the practice, and emulate the virtues, of the *Grecian*.

Libera per vacuum poſui veſtigia princeps,
Non aliena meo preſſi pede—

ſays *one* of the beſt of thoſe writers, who yet was only treading in the *footſteps* of his Grecian maſters.

But *another* was leſs reſerved, and ſeemed deſirous of being taken notice of, as an expreſs *imitator*, without ſo much as laying in his claim to this ſort of originality, in a new language — in multis verſibus Virgilius

Virgilius fecit—non ſurripiendi cauſâ, ſed *palam* imitandi, *hoc animo ut vellet agnoſci. Sen. Suaſor.* III.

And, on the revival of theſe arts in later times and more barbarous languages, the ſame ſpirit appeared again, or rather ſuperior honours were paid to ſucceſsful *imitation*. So that what a polite French writer declares on this head is, now, become the fixed opinion of the learned in all countries: "C'eſt même donner une grace "à ſes ouvrages, que de les orner de frag- "mens antiques. Des vers d'Horace et de "Virgile bien traduits, et mis en œuvre à "propos dans un poëme François, y font le "même effet que les ſtatuës antiques font "dans la gallerie de Verſailles. Les lec- "teurs retrouvent avec plaiſir, ſous une "nouvelle forme, la penſée, qui leur plût "autrefois en Latin [*y*]."

It ſhould, further, be added, that this praiſe of borrowing from the originals of *Greece* and *Rome* is now extended to the imitation of great *modern* authors. Every

[*y*] *Reflex. ſur la Poëſ. et ſur la Peint.* tom. ii. p. 80. Par. 1746.

body

body applauds this practice, where the imitation is of approved writers in *different* languages. And even in the *ſame* languages, when this liberty is taken with the moſt antient and venerable, it is not denied to have its *grace* and merit.

4. But, beſides theſe ſeveral incitements, *ſimilarity of genius* alone will almoſt neceſſarily determine a writer to the ſtudious emulation of ſome other. For, though it is with the *minds*, as the *faces* of men, that no two are exactly and in every feature alike; yet the general caſt of their genius, as well as the air and turn of the countenance, will frequently be very *ſimilar* in different perſons. When two ſuch ſpirits approach, they run together with eagerneſs and rapidity; the inſtinctive bias of the mind towards *imitation* being now quickened by *paſſion*. This is chiefly ſaid in reſpect of that uniformity of *ſtyle and manner*, which, whenever we obſerve it in two writers, we almoſt conſtantly charge to the account of *imitation*. Indeed, where the reſemblance holds to the laſt degree of *minuteneſs*, or where the *peculiarities* only

of the model are taken, there is ground enough for this ſuſpicion. For every original genius, however conſonant in the main to any other, has ſtill ſome diſtinct marks and characters of his own, by which he may be diſtinguiſhed; and to copy *peculiarities*, when there is no appearance of the ſame original ſpirit which gave birth to them, is manifeſt affectation. But the queſtion is put of ſuch, whoſe *manner* hath only a *general*, though ſtrong, reſemblance to that of ſome other, and whoſe true genius is above the ſuſpicion of falling into the trap of what Horace happily calls, EXEMPLAR VITIIS IMITABILE. And of theſe it is perhaps juſter to ſay, that a previous correſpondency of *character* impelled to *imitate*, than that imitation itſelf produced that correſpondency of *character*. At leaſt (which is all my concern at preſent) it will be allowed to incline a writer ſtrongly to *imitation*; and, where a congenial ſpirit appears to provoke him to it, a candid critic will not be forward to turn this circumſtance to the diſhonour of his *invention*.

5. Laſtly,

5. Laſtly, were every other conſideration out of the way, yet, oftentimes, the *very nature of the poet's theme* would oblige him to a diligent *imitation* of preceding writers. I do not mean this of ſuch ſubjects as ſuggeſt and produce a neceſſary conformity of deſcription, whether purpoſely intended or not. This hath been fully conſidered. But my meaning is, that, when the greater provinces of poetry have been already occupied, and its moſt intereſting ſcenes exhauſted; or, rather, their application to the uſes of poetry determined by great maſters, it becomes thenceforward unavoidable for ſucceeding writers to draw from their ſources. The law of probability exacts this at their hands; and one may almoſt affirm, that to *copy* them cloſely is to paint after *nature*. I ſhall explain myſelf by an inſtance or two.

With regard to the religious opinions and ceremonies of the Pagan world, the writings of Homer, it is ſaid, and very truly, were "*the ſtandard of private belief*, and "*the grand directory of public worſhip* [z]."

[z] *Inquiry into the L. and W. of Homer*, p. 174.

Whatever liberty might have been taken with the rites and gods of Paganiſm before his time; yet, when he had given an exact deſcription of *both*, and had formed, to the ſatisfaction of all, the eſtabliſhed religion into a kind of *ſyſtem*, ſucceeding poets were obliged, of courſe, to take their theology from him, and could no longer be thought to write *juſtly and naturally* of their gods, than whilſt their *deſcriptions* conformed to the *authentic* delineations of *Homer*. His relations, and even the *fictions*, which his genius had raiſed on the popular creed of elder Paganiſm, were now the proper archetype of all *religious repreſentations*. And to ſpeak of *theſe*, as given *truly and originally*, is, in effect, to ſay, that they were borrowed or rather tranſcribed from the page of *that poet*.

And the ſame may be obſerved of *hiſtorical facts*, as of *religious traditions*. For not unfrequently, where the ſubject is taken from authentic hiſtory, the authority of a preceding poet is ſo prevalent, as to render *any* account of the matter improbable which is not faſhioned and regulated after his

his ideas. A ſucceeding writer is neither at liberty to relate matters of fact, which no one thinks *credible*, nor to *feign* afreſh for himſelf. In this caſe, again, all that the moſt original genius has to do is to *imitate*. We have been told that the *ſecond book of the* AENEIS was tranſlated from Piſander [*a*]. Another thinks it was taken from the LITTLE ILIAD [*b*]. Or, why confine him to either of theſe, when METRODORUS, SYAGRUS, HEGESIANAX, ARATUS, and others, wrote poems on *the taking of* TROY? But, granting the poet (as is moſt likely) to have had theſe originals before him, what ſhall we infer from it? Only this, that he took his principal facts and circumſtances (as we ſee he was obliged to do, for the ſake of *probability*) from theſe writers. And why ſhould this be thought a greater crime in him, than in POLYGNOTUS; who, in his famous picture on this ſubject, was under the neceſſity, and for the ſame rea-

[*a*] MACROBIUS, V. *Saturnal.*
[*b*] *Inquiry into L. &c. of Homer*, p. 319.

ſon, of collecting his *ſubject-matter* from ſeveral poets [*c*]?

It follows, from theſe conſiderations, that we cannot juſtify ourſelves in thinking ſo hardly, as we commonly do, of the claſs of *imitators*; which is now, by the concurrence of various circumſtances, become the neceſſary character of almoſt all poets. Nor let it be any concern to the *true* poet that it is ſo. For *imitations*, when real and confeſſed, may ſtill have their merit; nay, I preſume to add, ſometimes a *greater* merit, than the very originals on which they are formed; and, with the reader's leave (though I am haſtening to a concluſion of this long diſcourſe), I will detain him one moment with the reaſons of this opinion.

After all the praiſes that are deſervedly given to the novelty of a *ſubject*, or the beauty of *deſign*, the ſupreme merit of poetry, and that which more eſpecially immortalizes the writers of it, lies in the *execution*. It is thus that the poets of the

[*c*] *Mem. de l'Acad. des Inſcript. &c.* tom. vi. p. 445.

Auguſtan

Auguſtan age have not ſo properly excelled, as diſcredited, all the productions of their predeceſſors; and that thoſe of the age of Louis XIV. not only obſcure, but will in proceſs of time obliterate, the fame and memory of the elder French writers. Or, to ſee the effect of maſterly execution in ſingle inſtances, hence it is, that Lucilius not only yields to Horace, but would be almoſt forgotten by us, if it had not been for the honour his imitator has done him. And nobody needs be told the advantage which Pope is likely to have over all our older ſatiriſts, excellent as ſome of them are, and more entitled than he to the honour of being inventors. We have here then an eſtabliſhed *fact*. The firſt eſſays of genius, though ever ſo original, are overlooked; while the later productions of men, who had never riſen to ſuch diſtinction but by means of the very originals they diſgrace, obtain the applauſe and admiration of all ages.

The ſolution of this *fact*, ſo notorious, and, at the ſame time, ſo contrary in appearance to the honours which men are

diſpoſed to pay to original invention, will open the myſtery of that matter we are now conſidering.

The faculties, or, as we may almoſt term them, the magic powers, which *ope the palace of eternity* to great writers, are a *confirmed judgment*, and *ready invention*.

Now, the *firſt* is ſeen to moſt advantage in ſelecting, out of all preceding ſtores, the particulars that are moſt ſuited to the nature of a poet's work, and the ends of poetry. When true genius has exhauſted, as it were, the various *manners* in which a work of art may be conducted, and the various *topics* which may be employed to adorn it, *judgment* is in its province, or rather ſovereignty, when it determines which of all theſe is to be preferred, and which neglected. In this ſenſe, as well as others, it will be moſt true, *Quòd artis pars magna contineatur imitatione.*

Nay, by means of this diſcernment, the very *topic* or method, which had no effect, or perhaps an ill one, under one management, or in one ſituation, ſhall charm every reader, in another. And, by force of

judging right, the copier ſhall almoſt loſe his title, and become an inventor:

Tantum *de medio* ſumptis accedit honoris.

But imitation, though it give moſt room to the diſplay of judgment, does not exclude the exerciſe of the other faculty, *invention*. Nay, it requires the moſt dextrous, perhaps the moſt difficult, exertion of this faculty. For conſider how the caſe ſtands. When we ſpeak of an *imitator*, we do not ſpeak, as the poet ſays, of

A barren-ſpirited fellow, one who feeds
On abject orts, and imitations—

but of one, who, in aiming to be like, contends alſo to be equal to his original. To attain to this *equality*, it is not enough that he ſelect the beſt of thoſe ſtores which are ready prepared to his hand (for thus he would be rather a ſkilful borrower, than a ſucceſsful imitator), but, in taking ſomething from others, he muſt add much of his own: he muſt improve the *expreſſion*, where it is defective, or barely paſſable: he muſt throw freſh lights of fancy on a common *image*: he muſt ſtrike out new

hints from a vulgar *ſentiment.* Thus, he will complete his original, where he finds it *imperfect:* he will ſupply its *omiſſions:* he will emulate, or rather ſurpaſs, its higheſt *beauties.* Or, in deſpair of this laſt, we ſhall find him taking a different *route*; giving us an equivalent in a beauty of another kind, which yet he extracts from ſome latent intimation of his author; or, where his purpoſe requires the very ſame repreſentation, giving it a new form, perhaps a nobler, by the turn of his application.

But all this requires not only the trueſt judgment, but the moſt delicate operation of inventive genius. And, where they both meet in a ſupreme degree, we ſometimes find an admired original, not only excelled by his imitator, but almoſt diſcredited. Of which, if there were no other, the ſixth book of Virgil, I mean taking it in the light of an *imitation*, is an immortal inſtance.

Thus much I could not forbear ſaying on the *merit* of ſucceſsful imitation. As to the *neceſſity* of the thing, hear the apology

logy of a great Poet, for himſelf. "All "that is left us, ſays this original writer, "is to recommend our productions by the "imitation of the antients: and it will be "found true, that, in every age, the higheſt "character for ſenſe and learning has been "obtained by thoſe who have been the "moſt indebted to them. For, to ſay truth, "whatever is very good ſenſe muſt have "been common ſenſe in all times; and "what we call learning is but the know-"ledge of our predeceſſors. Therefore, "they who ſay our thoughts are not our "own, becauſe they reſemble the antients, "may as well ſay our faces are not our "own, becauſe they are like our fathers: "and indeed it is very unreaſonable, that "people ſhould expect us to be ſcholars, "and yet be angry to find us ſo [*d*]."

He adds, "*I fairly confeſs, that I have "ſerved myſelf all I could by reading:*" where the good ſenſe of the *practice* is as conſpicuous, as the ingenuity, ſo becoming the greatneſs of his character, in *confeſſing* it. For, when a writer, who, as we have

[*d*] Mr. Pope's Preface to his Works.

ſeen,

ſeen, is driven by ſo many powerful motives to the imitation of preceding models, revolts againſt them all, and determines, at any rate, to be *original*, nothing can be expected but an aukward ſtraining in every thing. *Improper method*, *forced conceits*, and *affected expreſſion*, are the certain iſſue of ſuch obſtinacy. The buſineſs is to be *unlike*; and this he may very poſſibly be, but at the expence of graceful eaſe and true beauty. For he puts himſelf, at beſt, into a convulſed, unnatural ſtate; and it is well, if he be not forced, beſide his purpoſe, to leave *common ſenſe*, as well as his *model*, behind him. Like one, who would break looſe from an impediment which holds him faſt; the very endeavour to get clear of it throws him into *uneaſy attitudes*, and *violent contorſions*; and, if he gain his liberty at laſt, it is by an *effort* which carries him much further than the *point* he would wiſh to ſtop at.

And, that the reader may not ſuſpect me of aſſerting this without experience, let me exemplify what has been here ſaid in the caſe of a very eminent perſon, who, with all the advantages of art and nature that could be

be required to adorn the true poet, was ruined by this ſingle error. The perſon I mean was Sir WILLIAM D'AVENANT; whoſe *Gondibert* will remain a perpetual monument of the miſchiefs which muſt ever ariſe from this affectation of originality in lettered and polite poets.

The great author, when he projected his plan of an heroic poem, was ſo far from intending to ſteer his courſe by *example*, that he ſets out, in his preface, with upbraiding the followers of Homer, as a baſe and timorous crew of *coaſters*, who would not adventure to launch forth on the vaſt ocean of invention. For, ſpeaking of this poet, he obſerves, "that, as ſea-marks are "chiefly uſed to coaſters, and ſerve not "thoſe who have the ambition of diſco-"verers, that love to ſail in untried ſeas; "ſo he hath rather proved a guide for "thoſe whoſe ſatisfied wit will not ven-"ture beyond the track of others, than "to them who affect a new and re-"mote way of thinking, who eſteem it "a deficiency and meanneſs of mind to "ſtay

" ſtay and depend upon the authority of " example [*e*]."

And, afterwards, he profeſſedly makes his own merit to conſiſt in " an endeavour " to lead truth through unfrequented and " new ways, and from the moſt remote " ſhades; by repreſenting nature, though " not in an affected, yet in an unuſual " dreſs [*f*]." Theſe were the principles he went upon; let us now attend to the ſucceſs of his endeavours.

The METHOD of his work is defective in many reſpects. To inſtance in the two following. Obſerving the large compaſs of the antient epic, for which he ſaw no cauſe in nature, and which, he ſuppoſed, had been followed merely from a blind deference to the authority of the firſt model, he reſolved to conſtruct an heroic poem on the narrower and, as he conceived, juſter plan of the dramatic poets. And, becauſe it was their practice, for the purpoſe of *raiſing the paſſions* by a cloſe accelerated plot, and for the convenience

[*e*] Pref. to GONDIBERT, p. 2. Lond. 1651, 4to.
[*f*] Ibid. p. 30.

of

of *repreſentation*, to conclude their ſubject in *five acts*, he affects to reſtrain himſelf within the ſame limits. The event was, that, cutting himſelf off, by this means, from the opportunity of digreſſive ornaments, which contribute ſo much to the pomp of the epic poetry; and, what is more eſſential, from the advantage of the moſt gradual and circumſtantiated narration, which gives an air of *truth and reality* to the fable; he failed in accompliſhing the proper *end* of this poem, ADMIRATION, *produced* by a grandeur of deſign and variety of important incidents, and *ſuſtained* by all the energy and minute particularity of deſcription.

2. It was eſſential to the antient epos to raiſe and exalt the fable by the intervention of *ſupernatural agency*. This, again, the poet miſtook for the prejudice of the affected imitators of Homer, "who had ſo "often led them into heaven and hell, till, "by converſation with gods and ghoſts, "they ſometimes deprive us of thoſe na-"tural probabilities in ſtory, which are in-

"ſtructive

" ſtructive to human life [g]." Here then he would needs be original; and ſo, by recording only the affairs of men, hath fairly omitted a neceſſary part of the epic plan, and that which, of all others, had given the greateſt ſtate and magnificence to its conſtruction. Yet here, to do him juſtice, one thing deſerves our commendation. It had been the way of the Italian romancers, who were at that time the beſt poets, to run very much into prodigy and enchantment. " Not only to exceed the " *work*, but alſo the *poſſibility* of nature, " they would have impenetrable armors, " inchanted caſtles, invulnerable bodies, " iron men, flying horſes, and a thouſand " other ſuch things, which are eaſily feigned " by them that dare [b]." Theſe conceits, he rightly ſaw, had too ſlender a foundation in the ſerious belief of his age to juſtify a relation of them; and, had he only dropped theſe, his conduct had been without blame. But, as it is the weakneſs of human nature, the obſervation of this

[g] Pref. to GONDIBERT, p. 3. Lond. 1651, 4to.
[b] Anſwer to the Preface, p. 81.

extreme

extreme determined him to the other, of admitting nothing, however well eſtabliſhed in the general opinion, that was *ſupernatural.*

And as here he did too much, ſo in another reſpect it may be obſerved he did too little. The romancers, before ſpoken of, had carried their notions of *gallantry* in ordinary life as high as they had done thoſe of *preternatural agency* in their marvellous fictions. Yet here this original genius, who was not to be held by the ſhackles of ſuperſtition, ſuffered himſelf to be entrapped in the ſilken net of *love and honour*; and ſo hath adopted, in his draught of *characters*, that elevation of ſentiment which a change of manners could not but diſpoſe the reader to regard as *fantaſtic* in the Gothic romance, at the ſame time that he rejected what had the trueſt grace in the antient epic, a *ſober intermixture of religion.*

The *execution* of his poem was anſwerable to the general *method.* His SENTIMENTS are frequently forced, and ſo tortured by an affectation of wit, that every ſtanza

ſtanza hath the air of an epigram. And the EXPRESSION, in which he cloaths them, is ſo quaint and figurative, as turns his deſcription almoſt into a continued riddle.

Such was the effect of a ſtudious affectation of *originality* in a writer who, but for this miſconduct, had been in the firſt rank of our poets. His endeavour was to keep clear of the models, in which his youth had been inſtructed, and which he perfectly underſtood. And in this indeed he ſucceeded. But the ſucceſs loſt him the poſſeſſion of, what his large ſoul appears to have been full of, a true and permanent glory; which hath ever ariſen, and can only ariſe, from the unambitious ſimplicity of Nature, *contemplated* in her own proper form, or, by *reflexion*, in the faithful mirror of thoſe very models he ſo much dreaded.

In ſhort, from what hath been here advanced, and eſpecially as confirmed by ſo uncommon an inſtance, I think myſelf entitled to come at once to this *general concluſion*, which they, who have a comprehenſive view of the hiſtory of letters, in their

their ſeveral periods, and a juſt diſcernment to eſtimate their ſtate in them, will hardly diſpute with me, "that, though "many cauſes concur to produce a thorough "degeneracy of taſte in any country; yet "the *principal* ever is, THIS ANXIOUS "DREAD OF IMITATION IN POLITE AND "CULTIVATED WRITERS."

And, if ſuch be the caſe, among the other uſes of this Eſſay, it may perhaps ſerve for a ſeaſonable admonition to the poets of our time, to relinquiſh their vain hopes of *originality*, and turn themſelves to a ſtricter imitation of the beſt models. I ſay, a *ſeaſonable admonition*; for the more poliſhed a nation is, and the more generally theſe models are underſtood, the greater danger there is, as was now obſerved, of running into that worſt of literary faults, *affectation*. But, to ſtimulate their endeavours to this practice, the judgment of the public ſhould firſt be ſet right; and their readers prepared to place a juſt value upon it. In this reſpect too I would willingly contribute, in ſome ſmall degree, to the ſervice of letters. For the poet,

whoſe object is *fame*, will always adapt himſelf to the humour of thoſe who confer it. And till the public taſte be reduced by ſober criticiſm to a juſt ſtandard, ſtrength of genius will only enable a writer to pervert it ſtill further, by a too ſucceſsful compliance with its vicious expectations.

DIS-

DISSERTATION IV.

On the MARKS of IMITATION.

To Mr. MASON.

I Have ſaid, in the diſcourſe on POETICAL IMITATION, "that coincidencies of a "certain *kind*, and in a certain *degree*, can-"not fail to convict a writer of Imitation." [z]—You are curious, my friend, to know what theſe *coincidencies* are, and have thought that an attempt to point them out would furniſh an uſeful Supplement to what I have written on this ſubject. But the juſt execution of this deſign would require, beſides a careful examination of the workings of the human mind, an exact ſcrutiny of the moſt original and moſt imitative writers. And, with all your partiality for me, can you, in earneſt, think me capable of fulfilling the *firſt* of theſe conditions; or, if I were, do you imagine that, at this time o' day, I can have the leiſure to perform the *other?* My younger years, indeed, have

[z] P. 115, 116.

been ſpent in turning over thoſe authors which young men are moſt fond of; and among theſe I will not diſown that the Poets of ancient and modern fame have had their full ſhare in my affection. But You, who love me ſo well, would not wiſh me to paſs more of my life in theſe flowery regions; which though You may yet wander in without offence, and the rather as you wander in them with ſo pure a mind and to ſo moral a purpoſe, there ſeems no decent pretence for me to loiter in them any longer.

Yet in ſaying this I would not be thought to aſſume that ſevere character; which, though ſometimes the garb of reaſon, is oftener, I believe, the maſk of dulneſs, or of ſomething worſe. No, I am too ſenſible to the charms, nay to the uſes of your profeſſion, to affect a contempt for it. The great Roman ſaid well, *Haec ſtudia adoleſcentiam alunt; ſenectutem oblectant.* We make a full meal of them in our youth. And no philoſophy requires ſo perfect a mortification as that we ſhould wholly abſtain from them in our riper years. But ſhould we invert the obſervation, and take this light food not as

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the refreſhment only, but as the proper *nouriſhment* of Age; ſuch a name as Cicero's, I am afraid, would be wanting, and not eaſily found, to juſtify the practice.

Let us own then, on a greater authority than His, "That every thing is beautiful in "its ſeaſon." The Spring hath its *buds and bloſſoms*: But, as the year runs on, You are not diſpleaſed, perhaps, to ſee them fall off; and would certainly be diſappointed not to find them, in due time, ſucceeded by thoſe *mellow hangings* the poet ſomewhere ſpeaks of.

I could alledge ſtill graver reaſons. But I would only ſay, in one word, that your friend has had his ſhare in theſe amuſements. I may recollect with pleaſure, but muſt never live over again,

Pieriosque dies, et amantes carmina ſomnos.

Yet ſomething, you inſiſt, is to be done; and, if it amount to no more than a ſpecimen or ſlight ſketch, ſuch as my memory, or the few notes I have by me, would furniſh, the deſign, you think, is not totally to be relinquiſhed.

I underſtand the danger of gratifying you on theſe terms. Yet, whatever it be, I have no power to excuſe myſelf from any attempt, by which, you tell me at leaſt, I may be able to gratify you. I will do my beſt then to draw together ſuch obſervations, as I have ſometimes thought, in reading the poets, moſt material for the certain diſcovery of *Imitations*. And I addreſs them to YOU, not only as You are the propereſt judge of the ſubject; You, who underſtand ſo well in what manner the Poets are uſed to imitate each other, and who yourſelf ſo finely imitate the beſt of them; but as I would give You this ſmall proof of my affection, and have perhaps the ambition of publiſhing to the world in this way the entire friendſhip that ſubſiſts between us.

You tell me I have ſucceeded not amiſs in explaining the difficulty of detecting *Imitations*. The materials of poetry, You own, lie ſo much in common amongſt all writers, and the ſeveral ways of employing them are ſo much under the controul of common ſenſe, that writings will in many reſpects be ſimilar, where there is no thought or deſign of *Imitating*. I take advantage of this conceſſion,

ceſſion, to conclude from it, That we can ſeldom pronounce with certainty of Imitations without ſome external proof to aſſiſt us in the diſcovery. You will underſtand me to mean, by theſe *external proofs*, the previous knowledge we have, from conſiderations not reſpecting the *nature* of the work itſelf, of the writer's *ability* or *inducements* to imitate. Our firſt enquiry then will be, concerning the *Age*, *Character*, and *Education*, of the ſuppoſed Imitator.

We can determine with little certainty, how far the principal Greek writers have been indebted to Imitation. We trace the waters of Helicon no higher than to their ſource. And we acquieſce, with reaſon, in the device of the old painter, You know of, who ſomewhat rudely indeed, but not abſurdly, drew the figure of Homer with a fountain ſtreaming out of his mouth, and the other poets watering at it.

> Hither, as to their fountain, other Stars
> Repairing, in their golden urns draw light.

The Greek writers then were, or, for any thing we can ſay, might be, Original.

But we can rarely affirm this of any other. And the reaſon is plain. When a taſte for letters prevailed in any country, if it aroſe at firſt from the efforts of original thinking, it was immediately cheriſhed and cultivated by the ſtudy of the old writers. You are too well acquainted with the progreſs of antient and modern wit, to doubt of this fact. Rome adorned itſelf in the ſpoils of Greece. And both aſſiſted in dreſſing up the later European poetry. What elſe do You find in the Italian or French Wits, but the old matter, worked over again; only preſented to us in a new form, and embelliſhed perhaps with a conceit or two of mere modern invention?

But the Engliſh, You ſay, or rather your fondneſs for Your Maſters leads You to ſuppoſe, are original thinkers. It is true, Nature has taken a pleaſure to ſhew as what ſhe could do, by the production of ONE Prodigy. But the reſt are what we admire them for, not indeed without Genius, perhaps with a larger ſhare of it than has fallen to the lot of others, yet directly and chiefly by the diſcipline of art and the helps of imitation.

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The golden times of the Engliſh Poetry were, undoubtedly, the reigns of our two Queens. Invention was at its height in the *one*, and Correctneſs in the *other*. In *both*, the manners of a court refined, without either breaking or corrupting, the ſpirit of our poets. But do you forget that ELIZABETH read Greek and Latin almoſt as eaſily as our Profeſſors? and can you doubt that what ſhe knew ſo well would be known, admired, and imitated, by every other? Or ſay, that the writers of her time were, ſome of them, ignorant enough of the *learned* languages to be inventors; can you ſuppoſe, from what you know of the faſhion of that age, that their fancies would not be ſprinkled, and their wits refreſhed, by the eſſences of the Italian poetry?

I ſcarcely need ſay a word of our OTHER Queen, whoſe reign was unqueſtionably the æra of claſſic imitation and of claſſic taſte. Even they, who had never been as far as Greece or Italy to warm their imaginations or ſtock their memories, might do both to a tolerable degree in France; which, though it bowed to our country's arms, had almoſt the aſcendant in point of letters.

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I mention theſe things only to put you in mind that hardly *one* of our poets has been in a condition to do without, or certainly be above, the ſuſpicion of learned imitation. And the obſervation is ſo true, that even in this our age, when good letters, they ſay, are departing from us, the Greek or Roman ſtamp is ſtill viſible in every work of genius that has taken with the publick. Do you think one needed to be told in the title-page, that a late DRAMA, or ſome later ODES were formed on the antient model?

The drift of all this, you will ſay, is to overturn the former diſcourſe; for that now I pretend every degree of likeneſs to a preceding writer is an argument of imitation. Rather, if you pleaſe, conclude that, in my opinion, every degree of likeneſs is expoſed to the *ſuſpicion* of imitation. To convert this ſuſpicion into a proof, it is not enough to ſay, that a writer *might*, but that his circumſtances make it plain, or probable at leaſt, that he *did* imitate.

Of theſe *circumſtances* then, the *firſt* I ſhould think deſerving our attention, is the AGE in which the writer lived. One ſhould know if it were an age addicted to much ſtudy,

ſtudy, and in which it was creditable for the beſt writers to make a ſhew of their reading. Such eſpecially was the age ſucceeding to that memorable æra, the revival of letters in theſe weſtern countries. The faſhion of the time was, to interweave as much of antient wit as poſſible in every new work. Writers were ſo far from affecting to think and ſpeak in their own way, that it was their pride to make the admired antient think and ſpeak for them. This humour continued very long, and in ſome ſort even ſtill continues: with this difference indeed, that then the antients were introduced to do the honours, ſince, to do the drudgery, of the entertainment. But ſeveral cauſes conſpired to carry it to its height in England about the beginning of the laſt century. You may be ſure then, the writers of that period abound in imitations. The beſt poets boaſted of them as their ſovereign excellence. And you will eaſily credit, for inſtance, that B. Jonſon was a ſervile imitator, when you find him on ſo many occaſions little better than a painful tranſlator.

I foreſee the occaſion I ſhall have, in the courſe of this letter, to weary you with citations;

tions; and would not therefore go out of my way for them. Yet, amidſt a thouſand inſtances of this ſort in Jonſon, the following, I fancy, will entertain you. The Latin verſes, you know, are of Catullus:

Ut flos in ſeptis ſecretus naſcitur hortis,
Ignotus pecori, nullo convulſus aratro,
Quem mulcent auræ, firmat ſol, educat imber,
Multi illum pueri, multæ optavere puellæ.
Idem, quum tenui carptus defloruit ungui,
Nulli illum pueri, nullæ optavere puellæ.

It came in Jonſon's way, in one of his maſques, to tranſlate this paſſage; and obſerve with what induſtry he has ſecured the ſenſe, while the ſpirit of his author eſcapes him:

Look, how a flower that cloſe in cloſes grows,
Hid from rude cattle, bruiſed with no plows,
Which th'air doth ſtroke, ſun ſtrengthen, ſhow'rs ſhoot higher,
It many youths, and many maids deſire;
The ſame, when cropt by cruel hand is wither'd,
No youths at all, no maidens have deſir'd.

—It was not thus, you remember, that Arioſto and Pope have tranſlated theſe fine verſes. But to return to our purpoſe.

To

To this conſideration of the *Age* of a writer, you may add, if you pleaſe, that of his EDUCATION. Though it might not, in general, be the faſhion to affect learning, the habits acquired by a particular writer might diſpoſe him to do ſo. What was leſs eſteemed by the enthuſiaſts of Milton's time (of which however he himſelf was one of the greateſt) than prophane or indeed any kind of learning? Yet we, who know that his youth was ſpent in the ſtudy of the beſt writers in every language, want but little evidence to convince us that his great genius did not diſdain to ſtoop to imitation. You aſſent, I dare ſay, to Dryden's compliment, though it be an invidious one, "That no man "has ſo copiouſly tranſlated Homer's Gre-"ciſms, and the Latin elegancies of Virgil." Nay, do not you remember, the other day, that we were half of a mind to give him up for a ſhameleſs plagiary, chiefly becauſe we were ſure he had been a great reader.

But no good writer, it will be ſaid, has flouriſhed out of a learned age, or at leaſt without ſome tincture of learning. It may be ſo. Yet every writer is not diſpoſed to make

make the moſt of theſe advantages. What if we pay ſome regard then to the CHARACTER of the writer? A poet, enamoured of himſelf, and who ſets up for a great inventive genius, thinks much to profit by the ſenſe of his predeceſſors, and, even when he ſteals, takes care to diſſemble his thefts, and to conceal them as much as poſſible. You know I have inſtanced in ſuch a poet in Sir *William D'Avenant*. In detecting the imitations of ſuch a writer one muſt then proceed with ſome caution. But what if our concern be with *one*, whoſe modeſty leads him to revere the ſenſe and even the expreſſion of approved authors, whoſe taſte enables him to ſelect the fineſt paſſages in their works, and whoſe judgment determines him to make a free uſe of them? Suppoſe we know all this from common fame, and even from his own confeſſion; would you ſcruple to call that an *imitation* in him, which in the other might have paſſed for *reſemblance* only?

As the character is amiable, you will be pleaſed to hear me own, there are many modern poets to whom it belongs. Perhaps, the

the firſt that occurred to my thoughts was Mr. Addiſon. But the obſervation holds of others, and of *one*, in particular, very much his ſuperior in true genius. I know not whether you agree with me, that the famous line in the *Eſſay of man*;

"An honeſt man's the nobleſt work of God,"

is taken from Plato's, Πάντων ἱερώτατόν ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἀγαθός. But I am ſure you will, that the ſtill more famous lines, which ſhallow men repeat without underſtanding,

"For modes of Faith let graceleſs zealots fight,
"His can't be wrong whoſe life is in the right,"

are but copied, though with vaſt improvement in the force and turn of expreſſion, from the excellent, and, let it be no diſparagement to him to ſay, from the orthodox Mr. Cowley. The poet is ſpeaking of his friend CRASHAW.

"His Faith perhaps in ſome nice tenets might
"Be wrong; his life, I'm ſure, was in the right."

Mr. Pope, who found himſelf in the ſame circumſtances with Craſhaw, and had ſuffered no doubt from the like uncharitable conſtructions

conſtructions of *graceleſs zeal*, was very naturally tempted to adopt this candid ſentiment, and to give it the further heightening of his own ſpirited expreſſion.

Let us ſee then how far we are got in this inquiry. We may ſay of the old Latin poets, that they all came out of the Greek ſchools. It is as true of the moderns in this part of the world, that they in general have had their breeding in both the Greek and Latin. But when the queſtion is of any patticular writer, how far and in what inſtances you may preſume on his being a profeſſed imitator, much will depend on the certain knowledge you have of his *Age*, *Education*, and *Character*. When all theſe circumſtances meet in one man, as they have done in others, but in none perhaps ſo eminently as in B. Jonſon, wherever you find an acknowledged likeneſs, you will do him no injuſtice to call it *imitation*.

Yet all this, you ſay, comes very much ſhort of what you require of me. You want me to ſpecify thoſe peculiar conſiderations, and even to reduce them into rule, from which one may be authorized in any inſtance

inſtance to pronounce of imitations. It is not enough, you pretend, to ſay of any paſſage in a celebrated poet, that it moſt probably was taken from ſome other. In your extreme jealouſy for the credit of your order, you call upon me to ſhew the diſtinct marks which convict him of this commerce.

In a word, you require me to turn to the poets; to gather a number of thoſe paſſages I call Imitations; and to point to the *circumſtances* in each that prove them to be ſo. I attend you with pleaſure in this amuſing ſearch. It is not material, I ſuppoſe, that we obſerve any ſtrict method in our ramblings. And yet we will not wholly neglect it.

Perhaps then we ſhall find undoubted marks of Imitation both in the SENTIMENT and EXPRESSION of great writers.

To begin with ſuch conſiderations as are moſt GENERAL.

I. An identity of the *ſubject-matter* of poetry is no ſure evidence of Imitation; and leaſt of all, perhaps, in natural de-

ſcription. Yet where the *local* peculiarities of nature are to be deſcribed, there an exact conformity of the matter will evince an imitation.

Deſcriptive poets have ever been fond of laviſhing all the riches of their fancy on the *Spring*. But the appearances of this *prime of the year* are ſo diverſified with the climate, that deſcriptions of it, if taken directly from nature, muſt needs be very different. The Greek and Latin, and, ſince them, the Provencial poets, when they inſiſt, as they always do, on the indulgent ſoftneſs of this ſeaſon, its *genial dews* and *foſtering breezes*, ſpeak nothing but what is agreeable to their own experience and feeling.

It ver; et Venus; et Veneris praenuntius antè
Pinnatus graditur Zephyrus veſtigia propter:
Flora quibus mater praeſpergens antè viaï
Cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet.

Venus, or the ſpirit of love, is repreſented by thoſe poets as brooding o'er this delicious ſeaſon;

Rura

Rura foecundat voluptas: rura VENEREM ſentiunt.
Ipſa gemmas purpurantem pingit annum floribus:
Ipſa ſurgentis papillas de Favonî ſpiritu
Urguet in toros tepentes; ipſa roris lucidi, etc.

and a great deal more to the ſame purpoſe, which every one recollects in the old claſſic and in the Provencial poets.

But when we hear this language from the more northern, and particularly our Engliſh bards, who perhaps are ſhivering with the blaſts of the north-eaſt, at the very time their imagination would warm itſelf with theſe notions; one is certain this cannot be the effect of *obſervation*, but of a ſportful fancy, enchanted by the native lovelineſs of theſe exotic images, and charmed by the ſecret inſenſible power of *imitation*.

And to ſhew the certainty of this concluſion, Shakeſpeare, we may obſerve, who had none of this claſſical or Provencial bias on his mind, always deſcribes, not a Greek, or Italian, or Provencial, but an Engliſh Spring; where we meet with many

unamiable characters; and, among the reſt, inſtead of Zephyr or Favonius, we have the bleak north-eaſt, that *nips the blooming infants of the Spring*.

But there are other obvious examples. In Cranmer's prophetic ſpeech, at the end of HENRY VIII, when the poet makes him ſay of Queen Elizabeth, that,

" In her days ev'ry man ſhall eat with ſafety,
" Under his own vine, what he plants"—

and of King James, that,

" He ſhall flouriſh,
" And, like a mountain Cedar, reach his
" branches
" To all the plains about him"—

it is eaſy to ſee that his *Vine* and *Cedar* are not of Engliſh growth, but tranſplanted from Judæa. I do not mention this as an impropriety in the poet, who, for the greater ſolemnity of his prediction, and even from a principle of decorum, makes his archbiſhop fetch his imagery from Scripture. I only take notice of it as a certain argument, that the imagery was not his own, that is, not ſuggeſted by his own obſervation of nature.

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The caſe, you ſee, in theſe inſtances, is the ſame as if an Engliſh landſkip-painter ſhould chooſe to decorate his ſcene with an Italian ſky. The Connoiſſeur would ſay, he had copied this particular from Titian, and not from nature. I preſume then to give it for a certain note of Imitation, *when the properties of one clime are given to another.*

II. You will draw the ſame concluſion whenever you find "The Genius of one "*people* given to another."

1. Plautus gives us the following true picture of the Greek manners:

—In hominum aetate multa eveniunt hujuſmodi—
Irae interveniunt, redeunt rurſum in gratiam.
Verùm irae ſiquae fortè eveniunt hujuſmodi,
Inter eos rurſum ſi reventum in gratiam eſt,
Bis tanto amici ſunt inter ſe, quàm prius.
AMPHIT. A. III. S. 2.

You are better acquainted with the modern Italian writers than I am; but, if ever you find any of them transferring this placability of temper into an eulogy of his countrymen, conclude without heſitation that the ſentiment is taken.

2. The late Editor of Jonſon's works obſerves very well the impropriety of leaving a trait of Italian manners in his *Every man in his humour*, when he fitted up that Play with Engliſh characters. Had the ſcene been laid originally in England, and that *trait* been given us, it had convicted the poet of *Imitation*.

3. This attention to the genius of a people will ſometimes ſhew you, that the *form* of compoſition, as well as particular ſentiments, comes from Imitation. An inſtance occurs to me as I am writing. The Greeks, you know, were great haranguers. So were the antient Romans, but in a leſs degree. One is not ſurprized therefore that their hiſtorians abound in ſet ſpeeches; which, in their hands, become the fineſt parts of their works. But when you find modern writers indulging in this practice of ſpeech-making, you may gueſs from what ſource the habit is derived. Would Machiavel, for inſtance, as little of a ſcholar as they ſay he was, have adorned his fine hiſtory of Florence with ſo many harangues, if the claſſical bias, imperceptibly

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it may be to himſelf, had not hung on his mind?

Another example is remarkable. You have ſometimes wondered how it has come to paſs that the moderns delight ſo much in *dialogue-writing*, and yet that ſo very few have ſucceeded in it. The proper anſwer to the firſt part of your enquiry will go ſome way towards giving you ſatisfaction as to the laſt. The practice is not original, has no foundation in the manners of modern times. It aroſe from the excellence of the Greek and Roman dialogues, which was the uſual form in which the antients choſe to deliver their ſentiments on any ſubject.

Still another inſtance comes in my way. How happened it, one may aſk, that Sir PHILIP SYDNEY in his Arcadia, and afterwards SPENSER in his Fairy Queen, obſerved ſo unnatural a conduct in thoſe works; in which the ſtory proceeds as it were by ſnatches, and with continual interruptions? How was the good ſenſe of thoſe writers, ſo converſant beſides in the beſt models of antiquity, ſeduced into this

prepoſterous method? The anſwer no doubt is, that they were copying the deſign, or diſorder rather, of ARIOSTO, the favourite poet of that time.

III. Near akin to this contrariety *to the genius of a people* is another mark which a careful reader will obſerve "in the re-"preſentation of certain TENETS, different "from thoſe which prevail in a writer's "country or time."

1. We ſeldom are able to faſten an imitation with certainty on ſuch a writer as Shakeſpeare. Sometimes we are; but never to ſo much advantage as when he happens to forget himſelf in this reſpect. When Claudio, in *Meaſure for Meaſure*, pleads for his life in that famous ſpeech,

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obſtruction, and to rot;
This ſenſible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted ſpirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reſide
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed Ice;
To be impriſon'd in the viewleſs winds,
And blown with reſtleſs violence about
The pendent world—

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it is plain that theſe are not the ſentiments which any man entertained of *Death* in the writer's age, or in that of the ſpeaker. We ſee in this paſſage a mixture of Chriſtian and Pagan ideas; all of them very ſuſceptible of poetical ornament, and conducive to the argument of the ſcene; but ſuch as Shakeſpeare had never dreamt of but for Virgil's Platonic hell; where, as we read,

aliae panduntur inanes
Suſpenſae ad ventos: aliis ſub gurgite vaſto,
Infectum eluitur ſcelus, aut exuritur igni.
Virg. l. vi.

2. A prodigiouſly fine paſſage in Milton may furniſh another example of this ſort:

When Luſt
By unchaſt looks, looſe geſtures, and foul talk,
But moſt by lewd and laviſh act of Sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The ſoul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till ſhe quite loſe
The divine property of her firſt being.
Such are thoſe thick and gloomy ſhadows damp,
Oft ſeen in charnel vaults and ſepulchres,
Ling'ring, and ſitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it lov'd,
And

And linkt itſelf by carnal ſenſuality
To a degenerate and degraded ſtate.
Maſk at Ludlow Caſtle.

This philoſophy of *imbruted ſouls* becoming *thick ſhadows* is ſo remote from any ideas entertained at preſent of the effects of Sin, and at the ſame time is ſo agreeable to the notions of Plato (a double favourite of Milton, for his own ſake, and for the ſake of his being a favourite with his Italian Maſters), that there is not the leaſt queſtion of its being taken from the PHAEDO.

Ἡ τοιαύτη ψυχὴ βαρύνεσθαί τε καὶ ἕλκεσθαι πάλιν εἰς τὸν ὁρατὸν τόπον, φόβῳ τοῦ ἀιδοῦς τε καὶ ἅιδου, περὶ τὰ μνήματα καὶ τοὺς τάφους κυλινδουμένην· περὶ ἃ δὴ καὶ ὤφθη ἄττα ψυχῶν σκιοειδῆ φαντάσματα, οἷα παρέχονται αἱ τοιαῦται ψυχαὶ εἴδωλα, αἱ μὴ καθαρῶς ἀπολυθεῖσαι——

There is no wonder, now one ſees the fountain Milton drew from, that, in admiration of this poetical philoſophy (which nouriſhed the fine ſpirits of that time, though it corrupted ſome), he ſhould make the other ſpeaker in the ſcene cry out, as in a fit of extaſy,

How charming is divine philoſophy!
Not harſh, and crabbed, as dull fools ſuppoſe,
But muſical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feaſt of nectar'd ſweets,
Where no crude ſurfeit reigns—

the very ideas which Lord SHAFTESBURY has employed in his encomiums on the Platonic philoſophy; and the very language which Dr. HENRY MORE would have uſed, if he had known to expreſs himſelf ſo ſoberly.

3. Having ſaid ſo much of Plato, whom the Italian writers have helped to make known to us, let me juſt obſerve one thing to our preſent purpoſe of thoſe Italian writers themſelves. One of their peculiarities, and almoſt the firſt that ſtrikes us, is a certain ſublime myſtical air which runs through all their fictions. We find them a ſort of philoſophical fanatics, indulging themſelves in ſtrange conceits "concerning "the *Soul*, the *chyming of celeſtial orbs*, and "preſiding *Syrens*." One may tell by theſe marks, that they doted on the fancies of Plato; if we had not beſides direct evidence for this concluſion. Taſſo ſays of himſelf,

himſelf, and he applauds the ſame thing in Petrarch, "Leſſi già tutte l'opere di Platone, "è mi rimaſſero molti ſemi nella mente della "ſua dottrina." I take theſe words from Menage, who has much more to the ſame purpoſe in his elegant obſervations on the *Amintas* of this poet.

One ſees then where Milton had been for that imagery in the ARCADES,

Then liſten I
To the celeſtial Syrens' harmony,
That ſit upon the nine enfolded ſpheres
And ſing to thoſe that hold the vital ſhears,
And turn the adamantine ſpindle round,
On which the fate of Gods and men is wound.

The beſt comment on theſe verſes is a paſſage in the xth Book of Plato's Republic, where this whole ſyſtem, of *Syrens quiring to the fates*, is explained or rather delivered.

IV. We have ſeen a *Mark* of Imitation, in the alluſion of writers to certain ſtrange, and foreign tenets of philoſophy. The obſervation may be extended to all thoſe paſſages (which are innumerable in our poets) that allude to the *rites, cuſtoms, language, and theology of Paganiſm.*

It

It is true, indeed, this ſpecies of Imitation is not that which is properly the ſubject of this letter. The moſt original writer is allowed to furniſh himſelf with poetical ideas from all quarters. And the management of learned *Alluſion* is to be regarded perhaps as one of the niceſt offices of Invention. Yet it may be uſeful to ſee from what ſources a great poet derives his materials; and the rather, as this detection will ſometimes account for the *manner* in which he diſpoſes of them. However, I will but detain you with a remark or two on this claſs of Imitations.

1. I obſerve, that even Shakeſpeare himſelf abounds in learned Alluſions. How he came by them is another queſtion; though not ſo difficult to be anſwered, you know, as ſome have imagined. They, who are in ſuch aſtoniſhment at the learning of Shakeſpeare, beſides that they certainly carry the notion of his illiteracy too far, forget that the Pagan imagery was familiar to all the poets of his time—that abundance of this ſort of learning was to be picked up from almoſt every Engliſh book, he could take into

into his hands—that many of the beſt writers in Greek and Latin had been tranſlated into Engliſh—that his converſation lay among the moſt learned, that is, the moſt paganized, poets of his age—but above all, that, if he had never looked into books, or converſed with bookiſh men, he might have learned almoſt all the ſecrets of paganiſm (ſo far, I mean, as a poet had any uſe of them) from the MASKS of B. Jonſon; contrived by that poet with ſo pedantical an exactneſs, that one is ready to take them for lectures and illuſtrations on the antient learning, rather than exerciſes of modern wit. The taſte of the age, much devoted to erudition, and ſtill more, the taſte of the Princes for whom he writ, gave a prodigious vogue to theſe unnatural exhibitions. And the knowledge of antiquity, requiſite to ſucceed in them, was I imagine the reaſon that Shakeſpeare was not over-fond to try his hand at theſe elaborate trifles. Once indeed he *did*, and with ſuch ſucceſs as to diſgrace the very beſt things of this kind we find in Jonſon. The ſhort Maſk in the *Tempeſt* is fitted up with

with a claſſical exactneſs. But its chief merit lies in the beauty of the *Shew*, and the richneſs of the *poetry*. Shakeſpeare was ſo ſenſible of his ſuperiority, that he could not help exulting a little upon it, where he makes *Ferdinand* ſay,

> This is a moſt majeſtic *Viſion*, and
> Harmonious charming *Lays* —

It is true, another Poet, who poſſeſſed a great part of Shakeſpeare's genius and all Jonſon's learning, has carried this courtly entertainment to its laſt perfection. But the *Maſk at Ludlow Caſtle* was in ſome meaſure owing to the *Fairy Scenes* of his predeceſſor; who choſe this province of *Tradition*, not only as moſt ſuitable to the wildneſs of his vaſt creative imagination, but as the *ſafeſt* for his unlettered Muſe to walk in. For here he had much, you know, to expect from the popular credulity, and nothing to fear from the claſſic ſuperſtition of that time.

2. It were endleſs to apply this *note* of imitation to other poets confeſſedly learned. Yet one inſtance is curious enough to be juſt mentioned.

Mr.

Mr. Waller, in his famous poem on the victory over the Dutch, June 3, 1665, has the following lines;

> His flight tow'rds heav'n th' aſpiring BELGIAN took,
> But fell, like PHAETON, with thunder ſtrook:
> From vaſter hopes than his, he ſeem'd to fall,
> That durſt attempt the BRITISH Admiral:
> From her broadſides a ruder flame is thrown,
> Than from the fiery chariot of the Sun:
> THAT bears THE RADIANT ENSIGN OF THE DAY;
> And SHE, the flag that governs in the Sea.

He is comparing the Britiſh Admiral's *Ship* to the *Chariot* of the Sun. You ſmile at the quaintneſs of the conceit, and the ridicule he falls into in explaining it. But that is not the queſtion at preſent. The *latter*, he ſays, bears *the radiant enſign of the day*; the *other*, *the enſign of naval dominion*. We underſtand how properly the *Engliſh Flag* is here denominated. But what is that *other Enſign?* The *Sun* itſelf, it will be ſaid. But who, in our days, ever expreſſed the Sun by ſuch a periphraſis? The image is apparently antique, and eaſily explained

plained by thoſe who know that antiently the Sun was commonly emblematized by a *ſtarry or radiate figure*; nay, that ſuch a figure was placed aloft, as an *Enſign*, over the *Sun's charioteer*, as we may ſee in repreſentations of this ſort on antient Gems and Medals.

From this original then Mr. Waller's imagery was certainly taken; and it is properly applied in this place, where he is ſpeaking of the *Chariot of the Sun*, and *Phaeton's fall* from it. But, to remove all doubt in the caſe, we can even point to the very paſſage of a Pagan poet, which Mr. Waller had in his eye, or rather tranſlated:

Propterea noctes hiberno tempore longæ
Ceſſant, dum veniat RADIATUM INSIGNE DIEI.
Lucr. l. v. 698.

Here, you ſee, the poet's alluſion to a claſſic idea has led us to the diſcovery of the very paſſage from which it was taken. And this uſe a learned reader will often make of the ſpecies of Imitation here conſidered.

V. Great writers, you find, ſometimes forget the character of the *Age* they live in; the *principles* and *notions* that belong to it. "Sometimes they forget *themſelves*, "that is, their own ſituation and charac-"ter." Another ſign of the influence of *Imitation*.

1. When we ſee ſuch men, as STRADA and MARIANA, writers of fine talents indeed, but of recluſe lives and narrow obſervation, chuſing to talk like men of the world, and abounding in the moſt refined concluſions of the cabinet; we are ſure that this character, which we find ſo natural in a Cardinal DE RETZ, is but aſſumed by theſe Jeſuits. And we are not ſurprized to diſcover, on examination, that their beſt reflexions are copied from TACITUS.

On the other hand, when a man of the world took it into his head, the other day, in a moping fit, to talk *Sentences*, every body concluded that this was not the language of the writer or his ſituation, but that he had been poaching in ſome pedant; perhaps in the *Stoical Fop*, he affected ſo much contempt of SENECA.

2. Some-

2. Sometimes we catch a great writer deviating from his *natural manner*, and taking pains as it were to appear the very reverſe of his proper *character*. Would you wiſh a ſtronger proof of his being ſeduced, at leaſt for the time, by the charms of *imitation*?

Nothing is better known than the eaſy, elegant, agreeable vein of VOITURE. Yet you have read his famous Letter to BALZAC; and have been ſurprized, no doubt, at the forced, quaint, and puffy manner, in which it is written. The ſecret is, Voiture is aping Balzac from one end of this letter to the other. Whether to pay his court to him, or to laugh at him, or that, perhaps in the inſtant of writing, he really fancied an excellence in the ſtyle of that great man, is not eaſy to determine. An eminent French critic, I remember, is inclined to take it for a piece of mockery. At all events, we muſt needs eſteem it an *imitation*.

3. This remark on the turn of a writer's *genius* may be further applied to that of his *temper or diſpoſition*.

The natural miſanthropy of Swift may account for his thinking and ſpeaking very often in the ſpirit of ROCHFOUCAULT, without any thought of taking from his *Maxims*, though he was an admirer of them. But if at any time we obſerve ſo humane and benevolent a man as Mr. Pope giving into this language, we ſay of courſe, "This "is not his own, but an aſſumed manner."

Or what ſay you to an inſtance that exemplifies both theſe obſervations together? The natural unaffected turn of Mr. Cowley's manner, and the tender ſenſibility of his mind, are equally ſeen and loved in his proſe-works, and in ſuch of his poems as were written after a good model, or came from the heart. A clear ſparkling fancy, ſoftened with a ſhade of melancholy, made him perhaps of all our poets the moſt capable of excelling in the elegiac way, or of touching us in any way where a vein of eaſy language and moral ſentiment is required. Who but laments then to ſee this fine genius perverted by the prevailing pedantry of his age, and carried away, againſt the

the bias of his nature, to an emulation of the rapturous, high-ſpirited Pindar?

I might give many more examples. But you will obſerve them in your own reading. I take the firſt that come to hand, only to explain my meaning, which is, "That if you find a courſe of ſentiments, or caſt of compoſition, different from that to which the writer's *ſituation*, *genius*, or *complexion*, would naturally lead him, you may well ſuſpect him of imitation."

Still, it may be, theſe conſiderations are rather too general. I come to others more particular and deciſive.

VI. It may be difficult ſometimes to determine whether a ſingle ſentiment or image be derived or not. But when we ſee a cluſter of them in two writers, applied to the ſame ſubject, one can hardly doubt that one of them has copied from the other.

A celebrated French moraliſt makes the following reflexions: "Quelle chimere eſt-"ce donc que l'homme? Quelle nouveauté, "quel chaos, quel ſujet de contradiction? "Juge de toutes choſes, imbecile ver de

" terre ; depoſitaire du vrai, amas d'incerti-
" tude ; gloire, et rebut de l'univers."

Turn now to the *Eſſay on Man*, and tell me if Mr. Pope did not work up the following lines out of theſe reflexions:

" Chaos of thought and paſſion, all confus'd ;
" Still by himſelf abus'd or diſabus'd ;
" Created half to riſe, and half to fall,
" Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all ;
" Sole judge of truth, in endleſs error hurl'd ;
" The glory, jeſt, and riddle of the world."

2. This concluſion is ſtill more certain, when, together with a general likeneſs of ſentiments, we find the ſame *diſpoſition* of the parts, eſpecially if that diſpoſition be in no common form.

" Sweet is the breath of morn, her riſing ſweet
" With charm of earlieſt birds : pleaſant the ſun,
" When firſt on this delightful land he ſpreads
" His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flow'r,
" Gliſt'ring with dew"—

and the reſt of that fine ſpeech in the IVth Book of *Paradiſe loſt*, which you remember

ſo

ſo perfectly that I need not tranſcribe more of it.

Milton's fancy, as uſual, is rich and exuberant; but the conduct and application of his imagery ſhews, that the whole paſſage was ſhadowed out of thoſe charming but ſimpler lines in the DANAE of Euripides:

—φίλον μὲν φέγγος ἡλίκε τόδε.
Καλὸν δὲ πόντε χεῦμ' ἰδεῖν εὐήνεμον,
Γῆ τ' ἠρινὸν θάλλουσα, πλούσιόν θ' ὕδωρ,
Πολλῶν τ' ἔπαινόν ἐσί μοι λέξαι καλῶν.
Ἀλλ' ἀδὲν ἔτω λαμπρὸν, ἀθ' ἰδεῖν, καλὸν,
Ὡς τοῖς ἄπαισι, καὶ πόθῳ δεδηγμένοις,
Παίδων νεογνῶν ἐν δόμοις ἰδεῖν φάος.

VII. There is little doubt in ſuch caſes as theſe. There needs not perhaps be much in the caſe, ſometimes, of *ſingle* ſentiments or images. As where we find "a "ſentiment or image in two writers pre- "ciſely the ſame, yet new and unuſual."

1. Thus we are told very reaſonably, that *Milton's cluſt'ring locks* is the copy of Apollonius' ΠΛΟΚΑΜΟΙ ΒΟΤΡΥΟΕΝΤΕΣ.

Obſ. on Spencer, p. 80. For though the metaphor be a juſt one and very natural, yet there is perhaps no other authority for the uſe of it, but in theſe two poets. And Milton had certainly read Apollonius.

2. What the ſame critic obſerves of Milton's,

— "And *curl* the grove
"In ringlets *quaint*"—

being taken from Jonſon's,

"When was old Sherwood's head more *quaintly*
"*curl'd*?"

is ſtill more unqueſtionable. For here is a combination of ſigns to convict the former of imitation: not only the *ſingularity of the image*, but the *identity of expreſſion*, and, what I lay the moſt ſtreſs upon, the *boldneſs of the figure*, as employed by Milton. Jonſon ſpeaks of old Sherwood's *head*, as curl'd. Milton, as conſcious of his authority, drops the preparatory idea, and ſays at once, The *grove* curl'd.

Let me add to theſe, two more inſtances from the ſame poet.

3. *Spenſer*

3. *Spenſer* tells us of,

A little *glooming light*, much like a ſhade.
F. Q. c. II. s. 14.

Can you imagine that Milton did not take his idea from hence, when he ſaid, in his *Penſeroſo*,

—glowing embers thro' the room
Teach *light* to counterfeit a *gloom?*

4. Again, in his deſcription of Paradiſe,

Flow'rs of all hues, and without thorn the roſe.

Every poet of every time is laviſh of his flowers on ſuch occaſions. But *the roſe without thorn* is a rarity; and, though it was fine to imagine ſuch an one in Paradiſe, could only be an Italian refinement. Taſſo, you will think, is the original, when you have read the following lines:

Senza quei ſuoi pungenti iſpidi dumi
Spiegò le foglie la purpurea Roſa.

5. Another

5. Another inſtance, ſtill more remarkable, may be taken from Mr. Pope. One of the moſt ſtriking paſſages in the *Eſſay on Man* is the following:

> Superior Beings, when of late they ſaw
> A mortal man unfold all nature's law,
> Admir'd ſuch wiſdom in an earthly ſhape,
> And ſhew'd a NEWTON, as we ſhew an ape.
> Ep. ii. ver. 31.

Can you doubt, from the *ſingularity* of this ſentiment, that the great poet had his eye on Plato? who makes Socrates ſay, in alluſion to a remark of Heraclitus, Ὅτι ἀνθρώπων ὁ σοφώτατος πρὸς θεὸν πίθηκος φανεῖται. *Hipp. Major.*

The application indeed is different. And it could not be otherwiſe. For the obſervation, which the Philoſopher refers πρὸς θεὸν, is in the Poet given to *ſuperior Beings* only. The conſequence is, that the *Ape* is an object of *deriſion* in the former caſe; of *admiration*, in the latter.

To conclude this head, I will juſt obſerve to you, that, though the *ſame uncommon ſentiment* in two *writers* be uſually the effect

effect of imitation, yet we cannot affirm this of *Actors* in real life. The reaſon is, when the ſituation of two men is the ſame, *Nature* will dictate the ſame ſentiments more invariably than *Genius*. To give a remarkable inſtance of what I mean.

Tacitus relates, in the *firſt* book of his *Annals*, what paſſed in the ſenate on its firſt meeting after the death of Auguſtus. His politic ſucceſſor carried it for ſome time with much apparent moderation. He wiſhed, beſides other reaſons, to get himſelf ſolemnly recognized for Emperor by that Body, before he entered on the exerciſe of his new dignity. *Dabat famæ*, ſays the hiſtorian, *ut vocatus electuſque potius a Republicâ videretur, quàm per uxorium ambitum et ſenili adoptione irrepſiſſe.* One of his courtiers would not be wanting to himſelf on ſuch an occaſion. When therefore ſeveral motions had been made in the Senate, concerning the honours to be paid to the memory of their late Prince, VALERIUS MESSALLA moved, RENOVANDUM PER ANNOS SACRAMENTUM IN NOMEN TIBERII; in other words, that the oath of allegiance ſhould

ſhould be taken to Tiberius. This was the very point that Tiberius drove at. And the conſciouſneſs of it made him ſuſpect that this motion might be thought to proceed from himſelf. He therefore aſked Meſſalla, "*Num, ſe mandante, eam ſententiam prom-*"*iſſet?*" His anſwer is in the following words: "Sponte *dixiſſe, reſpondit; neque* "*in iis, quæ ad rempublicam pertinerent,* "conſilio niſi ſuo uſurum, vel cum periculo "offenſionis." *Ea*, concludes the hiſtorian, *ſola ſpecies adulandi ſupererat.*

Now it is very remarkable, that we find in Ludlow's memoirs one of Cromwell's officers, on the very ſame occaſion, anſwering the Protector in the very ſame ſpecies of flattery.

Colonel WILLIAM JEPHSON moved in the Houſe, that Cromwell might be made King. Cromwell took occaſion ſoon after to reprove the Colonel for this propoſition, telling him, that he wondered what he could mean by it. To which the other replied, "*That while he was permitted the honour of ſitting in that Houſe, he muſt deſire the liberty to diſcharge his conſcience, though*

though his opinion ſhould happen to diſpleaſe."

Here we have a very ſtriking coincidence of *ſentiment*, without the leaſt probability of imitation. For nobody, I dare ſay, ſuſpects Colonel William Jephſon of ſtealing this refined ſtroke of adulation from Valerius Meſſalla. The truth is, the ſame ſituation, concurring with the ſame corrupt diſpoſition, dictated this peculiar ſentiment to the two courtiers. Yet, had theſe ſimilar thoughts been found in two dramatic poets of the Auguſtan and Oliverian ages, we ſhould probably have cried out, "An Imi-"tation." And with good reaſon. For, beſides the poſſibility of an Oliverian poet's knowing ſomething of Tacitus, the ſpeakers had then been *feigned*, not real perſonages. And it is not ſo likely that two ſuch ſhould agree in this ſentiment: I mean, conſidering how new and particular it is. For, as to the more common and obvious ſentiments, even dramatic ſpeakers will very frequently employ the *ſame*, without affording any juſt reaſon to conclude that their prompters had turned plagiaries.

VIII. If

VIII. If to this ſingularity of a ſentiment, you add the *apparent harſhneſs* of it, eſpecially when not gradually *prepar'd* (as ſuch ſentiments always will be by exact writers, when of their own proper invention), the ſuſpicion grows ſtill ſtronger. I juſt glanced at an inſtance of this ſort in Milton's *curl'd* grove. But there are others ſtill more remarkable. Shall I preſume for once to take an inſtance from yourſelf?

Your fine Ode to Memory begins with theſe very lyrical verſes:

Mother of Wiſdom! Thou whoſe ſway
The throng'd ideal hoſts obey;
Who bidſt their ranks now vaniſh, now appear,
Flame in the van, and darken in the rear.

This ſublime imagery has a very original air. Yet I, who know how familiar the beſt antient and modern critics are to you, have no doubt that it is taken from STRADA.

"Quid accommodatius, ſays he, ſpeaking of your ſubject, Memory, quàm *ſimulachrorum ingentes copias*, tanquàm *addictam ubique tibi ſacramento militiam*, eo inter ſe nexu ac fide conjunctam cohærentemque habere; ut ſive unumquodque ſeparatim, ſive

ſive confertim univerſa, ſive ſingula ordinatim *in aciem proferre* velis; nihil planè in tantâ rerum herbâ turbetur, ſed alia *procul atque in receſſu* ſita prodeuntibus locum cedant; alia, ſe tota confeſtim promant atque in medium *certò evocata proſiliant?* Hoc tam magno, tam fido domeſticorum *agmine* inſtructus animus, &c." *Prol. Acad.* I.

Common writers know little of the art of *preparing* their ideas, or believe the very name of an Ode abſolves them from the care of art. But, if this uncommon ſentiment had been intirely your own, you, I imagine, would have dropped ſome *leading* idea to introduce it.

IX. You ſee with what a ſuſpicious eye, we, who aſpire to the name of critics, examine your writings. But every poet will not endure to be ſcrutinized ſo narrowly.

1. B. Jonſon, in his Prologue to the *Sad Shepherd*, is opening the ſubject of that poem. The *ſadneſs* of his ſhepherd is

For his loſt Love, who in the TRENT is ſaid
To have miſcarried! *'las! what knows the head*
Of a calm river, whom the feet have drown'd!

The reflexion in this place is unneceſſary and even impertinent. Who beſides ever heard of the *feet* of a river? Of *arms* we have. And ſo it ſtood in Jonſon's original.

Greateſt and faireſt Empreſs, know you this?
Alas! no more than Thames' calm head doth know
Whoſe meads his arms drown, or whoſe corn o'erflow.

Dr. Donne.

The poet is ſpeaking of the corruption of the courts of juſtice, and the alluſion is perfectly fine and natural. Jonſon was tempted to bring it into his prologue by the mere beauty of the ſentiment. He had a river at his diſpoſal, and would not let ſlip the opportunity. But his unnatural uſe of it detects his "imitation."

2. I do not know whether you have taken notice of a miſcarriage, ſomething like this, in the moſt judicious of all the poets.

Theocritus makes Polypheme ſay,

Καὶ γὰρ θὴν ἠδ' εἶδος ἔχω κακὸν, ὥς με λέγοντι,
Ἦ γὰρ πρὰν ἐς Πόντον ἐσέβλεπον· ἦν δὲ γαλάνα.

Nothing

Nothing could be better fancied than to make this enormous ſon of Neptune uſe the ſea for his looking-glaſs. But is Virgil ſo happy when his little land-man ſays,

Nec ſum adeò informis: nuper me in littore vidi,
Cùm placidum ventis ſtaret *mare*—

His wonderful judgment for once deſerted him, or he might have retain'd the ſentiment with a ſlight change in the application. For inſtance, what if he had ſaid,

Certè ego me novi, liquidæque in imagine vidi
Nuper aquæ, placuitque mihi mea forma videnti.

It is a ſort of curioſity, you ſay, to find Ovid reading a leſſon to Virgil. I will diſſemble nothing. The lines are, as I have cited them, in the 13th book of the Metamorphoſis. But unluckily they are put into the mouth of Polypheme. So that, inſtead of inſtructing one poet by the other, I only propoſe that they ſhould make an exchange; Ovid take Virgil's *ſea*; and Virgil be contented with Ovid's *water*. However this be, you may be ſure the authority of the Prince of the Latin poets will carry

it with admiring poſterity above all ſuch ſcruples of decorum. Nobody wonders therefore to read in Taſſo,

——Non ſon' io
Da diſprezzar, ſe ben me ſteſſo vidi
Nel liquido del mar, quando l'altr' hieri
Taceano i venti, et ei giacea ſenz' onda.

But of all the miſappliers of this fine original ſentiment, commend me to that *other* Italian, who made his ſhepherd ſurvey himſelf, in a *fountain* indeed, but a fountain of his own weeping.

3. You will forgive my adding one other inſtance "of this vicious application of a "fine thought."

You remember thoſe agreeable verſes of Sir *John Suckling*,

"Tempeſts of winds thus (as my ſtorms of grief
Carry my tears which ſhould relieve my heart)
Have hurried to the thankleſs ocean clouds
And ſhow'rs, that needed not at all the courteſy;
When the poor plains have languiſh'd for the want,
And almoſt burnt aſunder."—

Brennoralt. A. III. S. 1.

 I do

I do not ſtay to examine how far the fancy of *tears relieving the heart* is allowable. But admitting the propriety of the obſervation, in the ſenſe the poet intended it, the ſimile is applied and expreſſed with the utmoſt beauty. It accordingly ſtruck the beſt writers of that time. SPRAT, in his hiſtory of the *Royal Society*, is taking notice of the miſapplication of philoſophy to ſubjects of Religion. "That ſhower, ſays he, has done "very much injury by falling on the ſea, "for which the ſhepherd, and the plough-"man, called in vain: the wit of men has "been profuſely poured out on *Religion*, "which needed not its help, and which was "only thereby made more tempeſtuous; "while it might have been more fruitfully "ſpent on ſome parts of *philoſophy*, which "have been hitherto barren, and might "ſoon have been made fertile." p. 25.

You ſee what wire-drawing here is to make the compariſon, ſo proper in its original uſe, juſt and pertinent to a ſubject to which it had naturally no relation. Beſides, there is an abſurdity in ſpeaking of a ſhower's doing *injury* to the ſea by falling

into it. But the thing illuſtrated by this compariſon requiring the idea of *injury*, he transfers the idea to the comparing thing. He would ſoften the abſurdity, by running the compariſon into metaphorical expreſſion; but, I think, it does not remove it. In ſhort, for theſe reaſons, one might eaſily have inferred an Imitation, without that parentheſis to apologize for it—"To uſe "that metaphor which an excellent poet of "our nation turns to *another* purpoſe—"

But a poet of that time has no better ſucceſs in the management of this metaphor, than the Hiſtorian.

Love makes ſo many hearts the prize
Of the bright Carlisle's conqu'ring eyes;
Which ſhe regards no more, than they
The tears of leſſer beauties weigh.
So have I ſeen the loſt clouds pour
Into the Sea an uſeleſs ſhow'r;
And the vex'd Sailors curſe the rain,
For which poor Shepherds pray'd in vain.

Waller's Poems, p. 25.

The ſentiment ſtands thus: "She re-"gards the captive *hearts* of others no "more than thoſe others—the *tears* of "leſſer

" leſſer beauties." Thus, with much difficulty, we get to *tears*. And when we have them, the alluſion to *loſt clouds* is ſo ſtrained (beſides that he makes his ſhower both *uſeleſs* and *injurious*), that one readily perceives the poet's thought was diſtorted by *imitation*.

X. The charge of Plagiariſm is ſo diſreputable to a great writer, that one is not ſurprized to find him anxious to avoid the imputation of it. Yet " this very anxiety " ſerves ſometimes to fix it upon him."

Mr. Dryden, in the Preface to his tranſlation of Freſnoy's Art of painting, makes the following obſervation on Virgil: " He " pretends ſometimes to trip, but it is only " to make you think him in danger of a " fall when he is moſt ſecure. Like a ſkil- " ful dancer on the Rope (if you will par- " don the meanneſs of the ſimilitude), who " ſlips willingly, and makes a ſeeming ſtum- " ble, that you may think him in great " hazard of breaking his neck; while, at " the ſame time, he is only giving you a " proof of his dexterity. My late Lord

" Roſcommon was often pleaſed with this " reflexion, &c." p. 50.

His apology for the uſe of this ſimile, and his concluding with Lord Roſcommon's ſatisfaction at his remark, betray, I think, an anxiety to paſs for original, under the conſciouſneſs of being but an imitator. So that, if we were to meet with a paſſage very like this in a celebrated antient, we could hardly doubt of its being copied by Mr. Dryden. What think you then of this obſervation in one of Pliny's Letters, " Ut quasdam artes, ità eloquentiam nihil " magis quàm ancipitia commendant. Vides " qui funè in ſumma nituntur, quantos " ſoleant excitare clamores, cùm jam jam- " que caſuri videntur." L. ix. Ep. 26.

PRIOR, one may obſerve, has acted more naturally in his *Alma*; and by ſo doing, though the reſemblance be full as great, one is not ſo certain of his being an Imitator. The verſes are, of BUTLER:

He, perfect dancer, climbs the Rope,
And balances your fear and hope:
If after ſome diſtinguiſh'd leap,
He drops his pole and ſeems to ſlip;
Strait, gath'ring all his active ſtrength,
He riſes higher half his length.

With

With *wonder* you approve his ſlight,
And owe your pleaſure to your *fright*. C. II.

Though the two laſt lines ſeem taken from the application of this ſimilitude in Pliny, "Sunt enim maximè *mirabilia*, quæ "maximè inexpectata, et maximè, *pericu-* "*loſa*."

XI. Writers are ſometimes ſollicitous to conceal themſelves; at others, they are fond to proclaim their Imitation. "It is "when they have a mind to ſhew their "dexterity in contending with a great "original."

You remember theſe lines of Milton in his Comus:

Wiſdom's ſelf
Oft ſeeks to ſweet retired Solitude;
Where, with her beſt nurſe, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That, in the various buſtle of reſort,
Were all too ruffled, and ſometimes impair'd.

On which Bp. Warburton has the following note: "Mr. Pope has imitated this "thought, and (as was always his way when "he imitated) improved it.

" Bear me, ſome Gods! oh, quickly bear me
" hence
" To wholeſome Solitude, the nurſe of Senſe;
" Where Contemplation prunes her ruffled
" wings,
" And the free Soul looks down, to pity kings.

" Mr. Pope has not only improved the har-
" mony, but the ſenſe. In Milton, *Contem-*
" *plation* is called the *Nurſe*; in Pope, more
" properly *Solitude:* in Milton, *Wiſdom* is
" ſaid to *prune her* wings; in Pope, *Contem-*
" *plation* is ſaid to do it, and with much
" greater propriety, as ſhe is of a *ſoaring*
" nature, and on that account is called by
" Milton himſelf, the *Cherub Contempla-*
" *tion.*"

One ſees, that Mr. Pope's view was to ſurpaſs his original; " which, it is ſaid, was " always his way when he imitated." The meaning is, when he purpoſely and profeſſedly bent himſelf to Imitation; for then his fine genius taught him to ſeize every beauty, and his wonderful judgment, to avoid every defect or impropriety in his author. And this diſtinction is very material to our paſſing a right judgment on the merit of Imitators. It is commonly ſaid, that

that their imitations fall ſhort of their originals. And they will do ſo, whatever the genius of the imitator be, if they are formed only on a *general* reſemblance of the thought imitated. For an inventor comprehends his own idea more diſtinctly and fully, and of courſe expreſſes his purpoſe better, than a caſual imitator. But the caſe is different, when a good writer *ſtudies* the paſſage from which he borrows. For then he not only copies, but improves on the firſt idea; and thus there will frequently (as in the caſe of Pope) be greater merit in the copyiſt than the original.

XII. We ſometimes catch an imitation lurking "in a licentious Paraphraſe." The ground of ſuſpicion lies in the very complacency with which a writer expatiates on a borrowed ſentiment. He is uſually more reſerved in adorning one of his own.

1. AURELIUS VICTOR obſerves of Fabricius, "quòd difficiliùs ab honeſtate, quàm "Sol à ſuo curſu, averti poſſet."

TASSO flouriſhes a little on this thought;

Prima dal corſo diſtornar la Luna
E le ſtelle potrà, che dal diritto
Torcere un ſol mio paſſo— C. x. S. 24.

Mr.

Mr. Waller riſes upon the Italian,

" where her love was due,
So faſt, ſo faithful, loyal, and ſo true,
That a bold hand as ſoon might hope to force
The rowling lights of heav'n, as change her
courſe." *On the Death of Lady* RICH.

But Mr. COWLEY, knowing what authority he had for the general ſentiment, gives the reins to his fancy, and wantons upon it without meaſure:

Virtue was thy life's centre, and from thence
Did ſilently and conſtantly diſpenſe
The gentle vigorous influence
To all the wide and fair circumference:
And all the parts upon it lean'd ſo eaſilie,
Obey'd the mighty force ſo willingſlie,
That none could diſcord or diſorder ſee
In all their contrarietie.
Each had his motion natural and free,
And the whole no more mov'd, than the whole
world could be. BRUTUS.

2. The ingenious author of the *Obſervations on Spenſer* (from which fine ſpecimen of his critical talents one is led to expect great things) directs us to another imitation of this ſort.

Taſſo had ſaid,

Coſi

Coſi a le belle lagrime le piume
Si bagna Amore, e gode al chiaro lume,

On which ſhort hint Spenſer has raiſed the following luxuriant imagery:

The blinded archer-boy,
Like lark in ſhow'r of rain,
Sate bathing of his wings,
And glad the time did ſpend
Under thoſe cryſtal drops,
Which fall from her fair eyes,
And at their brighteſt beams
Him proyn'd in lovely wiſe.

3. I will juſt add two more examples of the ſame kind; chiefly, becauſe they illuſtrate an obſervation very proper to be attended to on this ſubject; which is, "That, "in this diſplay of a borrowed thought, the "Imitation will generally fall ſhort of the "Original, even though the borrower be the "greater Genius."

The Italian poet, juſt now quoted, ſays ſublimely of the *Night*,

—Uſci la Notte, è ſotto l'ali
Menò il ſilentio— C. v. S. 79.

Milton has given a paraphraſe of this paſſage, but very much below his original,

Now

Now came ſtill Ev'ning on, and Twilight gray
Had in her ſober livery all things clad;
Silence accompany'd—

The ſtriking part of Taſſo's picture is, "*Night's bringing in Silence under her wings.*" So new and ſingular an idea as this had detected an Imitation. Milton contents himſelf then with ſaying ſimply, *Silence accompany'd.* However, to make amends, as he thought, for this defect, *Night itſelf*, which the Italian had merely perſonized, the Engliſh poet not only *perſonizes*, but employs in a very becoming office:

Now came ſtill Ev'ning on, and Twilight gray
Had in her ſober livery all things clad.

Every body will obſerve a little blemiſh in this fine couplet. He ſhould not have uſed the epithet *ſtill*, when he intended to add,

Silence accompanied—

But there is a worſe fault in this *Imitation.* To hide it, he ſpeaks of *Night's livery.* When he had done that, to ſpeak of her *wings* had been ungraceful. Therefore he is forced to ſay obſcurely, as well as *ſimply*, *Silence accompany'd*; and ſo loſes a more noble

noble image for a leſs noble one. The truth is, they would not ſtand together. *Livery* belongs to *human grandeur*; *wings* to *divine* or *celeſtial*. So that, in Milton's very attempt to ſurpaſs his original, he put it out of his power to employ the *circumſtance* that moſt recommended it.

He is not happier on another occaſion. Spenſer had ſaid, with his uſual ſimplicity,

" Virtue gives herſelf light thro' darkneſs for
" to wade." F. Q. B. 1.

Milton catched at this image, and has run it into a ſort of paraphraſe in thoſe fine lines,

" Virtue could ſee to do what Virtue would
" By her own radiant light, tho' Sun and Moon
" Were in the flat ſea ſunk"— COMUS.

In Spenſer's line we have the idea of Virtue dropt down into a world all over darkened with vice and error. Virtue excites the light of Truth to ſee all around her, and not only diſſipate the neighbouring darkneſs, but to direct her courſe in purſuing her victory, and driving her enemy out of it; the arduouſneſs of which exploit is well expreſſed by—*through darkneſs for to*

WADE.

WADE. On the contrary, Milton, in borrowing, ſubſtitutes the phyſical for the moral idea—*by her own radiant light*—and *though Sun and Moon were in the flat ſea ſunk.* It may be aſked, how this happened? Very naturally. Milton was caught with the obvious *imagery*, which he found he could diſplay to more advantage; and ſo did not enough attend to the noble *ſentiment* that was couched under it.

XIII. Theſe are inſtances of a paraphraſtical licence in dilating on a famous ſentiment, or image. The *ground* is the ſame, only flouriſhed upon by the genius of the imitator. At times we find him practiſing a different art; "not merely "ſpreading, as it were, and laying open "the ſame ſentiment, but *adding* to it, and "by a new and ſtudied device improving "upon it." In this caſe we naturally conclude, that the refinement had not been made, if the plain and ſimple thought had not preceded and given riſe to it. You will apprehend my meaning by what follows.

1. Shakeſpeare had ſaid of Henry IVth,

—He

—He cannot long hold out theſe pangs;
The inceſſant care and labour of his mind
Hath wrought the mure, that ſhould confine it in,
So thin, that Life looks through, and will break out. HEN. IV. A. IV.

You have here the thought in its firſt ſimplicity. It was not unnatural, after ſpeaking of the body as a caſe or tenement of the ſoul, *the mure that confines it*, to ſay, that, as that caſe wears away and grows thin, Life looks through, and is ready to break out.

DANIEL, by refining on this ſentiment, if by nothing elſe, ſhews himſelf to be the copyiſt. Speaking of the ſame Henry, he obſerves,

And Pain and Grief, inforcing more and more,
Beſieg'd the hold that could not long defend;
Conſuming ſo all the reſiſting ſtore
Of thoſe proviſions Nature deign'd to lend,
As that the walls, worn thin, permit the mind
To look out thorough, and his frailty find.

Here we ſee not ſimply that *Life* is going to break through the infirm and much-worn habitation, but that the *Mind* looks through and *finds* his frailty, that it diſcovers that Life

Life will ſoon make his eſcape. I might add, that the four firſt lines are of the nature of the *Paraphraſe* conſidered in the laſt article; and that the *expreſſion* of the others is too much the ſame to be original. But we are not yet come to the head of *expreſſion*. And I chooſe to confine myſelf to the ſingle point of view we have before us.

Daniel's improvement then looks like the artifice of a man that would outdo his Maſter. Though he fails in the attempt; for his ingenuity betrays him into a falſe thought. The mind, looking through, does not find *its own frailty*, but the frailty of the *building* it inhabits. However, I have endeavoured to rectify this miſtake in my explanation.

The truth is, Daniel was not a man to improve upon Shakeſpeare. But now comes a writer, that knew his buſineſs much better. He chuſes to employ this well-worn image, or rather to alter it a little and then employ it, for the conveyance of a very new fancy. If the mind could look through a *thin* body, much more one that was

cracked

cracked and battered. And if it be for looking through at all, he will have it look to good purpoſe, and find not its frailty only, but much other uſeful knowledge.

The lines are Mr. Waller's, and in the beſt manner of that very *refined* writer:

Stronger by weakneſs, *wiſer*, men become
As they draw near to their eternal home.
The ſoul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light thro' chinks that time has made.

2. After all, theſe conceits, I doubt, are not much to your taſte. The inſtance I am going to give will afford you more pleaſure. Is there a paſſage in Milton you read with more admiration than this in the *Penſeroſo?*

Entice the dewy-feather'd ſleep;
And let ſome ſtrange myſterious dream
Wave at his wings in airy ſtream;
Of lively portraiture diſplay'd
Softly on my eye-lids laid.

Would you think it poſſible now that the ground-work of this fine imagery ſhould be laid in a paſſage of Ben Jonſon? Yet ſo we read, or ſeem to read, in his *Viſion of Delight.*

Break, Phant'ſy, from thy cave of cloud,
And ſpread thy purple wings:
Create of airy forms a ſtream,
And tho' it be a waking dream,
Yet let it like an odour riſe
To all the ſenſes here,
And fall like ſleep upon their eyes,
Or muſick in their ear.

It is a delicate matter to analyze ſuch paſſages as theſe; which, how exquiſite ſoever in the poetry, when eſtimated by the *fine phrenzy* of a genius, hardly look like ſenſe when given in plain proſe. But, if you give me leave to take them in pieces, I will do it at leaſt with reverence. We find then, that *Fancy* is here employed in one of her niceſt operations, the production of a *day-dream*; which both poets repreſent as an *airy form*, or forms *ſtreaming* in the air, gently falling on the eye-lids of her entranced votary. So far their imagery agrees. But now comes the *mark* of imitation I would point out to you. Milton carries the idea ſtill further, and improves finely upon it, in the *conception* as well as expreſſion. Jonſon evokes Fancy out of her

her *cave of cloud*, thoſe cells of the mind, as it were, in which, during her intervals of reſt, and when unemployed, Fancy lies hid; and bids her, like a Magician, *create* this ſtream of forms. All this is juſt, and truly poetical. But Milton goes further. He employs the *dewy-feather'd ſleep* as his Miniſter in this machinery. And the myſterious day-dream is ſeen *waving at his wings in airy ſtream*. Jonſon would have Fancy *immediately* produce this Dream. Milton more poetically, becauſe in more diſtinct and particular imagery, repreſents Fancy as doing her work by means of *ſleep*; that ſoft compoſure of the mind abſtracted from outward objects, in which it yields to theſe phantaſtic impreſſions.

You ſee then a wonderful improvement in this addition to the original thought. And the notion of *dreams waving at the wings of ſleep* is, by the way, further juſtified by what Virgil feigns of their *ſticking*, or rather fluttering, on the leaves of his magic tree in the infernal regions. But it is curious to obſerve how this improvement itſelf aroſe from hints ſuggeſted by his ori-

ginal. From Jonſon's dream, *falling like ſleep upon their eyes*, Milton took his *feather'd ſleep*, which he imperſonates ſo properly; and from *Phant'ſy's ſpreading her purple wings*, a circumſtance not ſo immediately connected with Jonſon's deſign *of creating of airy forms a ſtream*, he catched the idea of *Sleep ſpreading her wings*, and to good purpoſe, ſince the airy ſtream of forms was to *wave at them*.

However, Jonſon's image is in itſelf incomparable. It is taken from a *winged* inſect breaking out of its Aurelia ſtate, its *cave of cloud*, as it is finely called: not unlike that of Mr. Pope,

> So ſpins the Silk-worm ſmall it's ſlender ſtore,
> And labours till it *clouds* itſelf all o'er.
>
> IV. *Dunc.* ver. 253.

and nothing can be juſter than this alluſion. For the antients always pictured FANCY and HUMAN-LOVE with Inſects' wings.

XIV. Thus then, whether the poet *prevaricates*, *enlarges*, or *adds*, ſtill we frequently find ſome latent circumſtance attending

tending his management, that convicts him of Imitation. Nay, he is not ſafe even when he denies himſelf theſe liberties; I mean, when he only *glances* at his original. "For, in this caſe, the borrowed ſentiment "uſually wants ſomething of that perſpi- "cuity which always attends the firſt deli- "very of it." This Rule may be conſidered as the Reverſe of the *laſt*. A writer ſometimes takes a pleaſure to *refine* on a plain thought: ſometimes (and that is uſually when the original ſentiment is well known, and fully developed) he does not ſo much as attempt to open and *explain* it.

A poet of the laſt age has the following lines, on the ſubject of *Religion:*

Religion now is a young Miſtreſs here,
For which each man will fight, and dye at leaſt;
Let it alone awhile, and 'twill become
A kind of married wife; people will be
Content to live with it in quietneſs.

SUCKLING ſays this in his Tragedy of Brennoralt; which is a Satire throughout on the riſing troubles of that time. BUTLER has

taken the thought, and applied it on the ſame occaſion:

When hard words, jealouſies, and fears,
Set folks together by the ears,
And made them fight, like mad or drunk,
For dame Religion, as for Punk—

Setting aſide the difference between the burleſque and ſerious ſtyle, one eaſily ſees that this ſentiment is borrowed from Suckling. It has not the clear and full expoſition of an original thought. Butler only repreſents men as drunk with Religion, and fighting for it as for a Punk. The *other* gives the reaſon of the Debauch, namely, *fondneſs for a new face*; and tells us, beſides, how things would ſubſide into peace or indifference on a nearer and more familiar acquaintance. One could expect no leſs from the *Inventor* of this humorous thought; a *Borrower* might be content to allude to it.

XV. This laſt conſideration puts me in mind of another artifice to conceal a borrowed ſentiment. Nothing lies more open to diſcovery than a ſimile in form, eſpecially

if

if it be a remarkable one. Theſe are a ſort of *purpurei panni*, which catch all eyes; and, if the compariſon be not a writer's own, he is almoſt ſure to be detected. The way then that refined Imitators take to conceal themſelves in ſuch a caſe is to run the Similitude into Allegory. We have a curious inſtance in Mr. Pope, who has ſucceeded ſo well in the attempt, that his plagiariſm, I believe, has never been ſuſpected.

The verſes I have in my eye are theſe fine ones, addreſſed to Lord Bolingbroke:

Oh, while along the ſtream of time thy name
Expanded flies, and gathers all it's fame,
Say, ſhall my little Bark attendant ſail,
Purſue the triumph, and partake the Gale?

What think you now of theſe admired verſes? are they, beſides their other beauties, perfectly original? You will be able to reſolve this queſtion, by turning to the following paſſage in a Poet, Mr. Pope was once fond of, I mean STATIUS,

Sic ubi magna novum Phario de litore puppis
Solvit iter, jamque innumeros utrinque rudentes
Lataque veliferi porrexit brachia mali

Invaſitque vias, in eodem anguſta phaſelus
Æquore, et immenſi partem ſibi vendicat Auſtri.
SILV. lib. V. i. 242.

but eſpecially this other,

— immenſæ veluti CONNEXA carinæ
CYMBA MINOR, cum ſævit hyems, pro parte, furentes
Parva receptat aquas, et EODEM VOLVITUR AUSTRO.
SILV. lib. I. iv. 120.

XVI. I releaſe you from this head of *Sentiments*, with obſerving that we ſometimes conclude a writer to have had a celebrated original in his eye, when, "without "copying the peculiar thought, or ſtroke of "imagery, he gives us only a copy of the "impreſſion it had made upon him."

1. In delivering this rule, I will not diſſemble that I myſelf am copying, or rather ſtealing, from a great critic: from *one*, however, who will not reſent this theft; as indeed he has no reaſon, for he is ſo prodigiouſly rich in theſe things, as in others of more value, that what he neglects or flings away would make the fortune of an ordinary

nary writer. The perſon I mean is the late Editor of Shakeſpeare, who, in an admirable note on Julius Cæſar, taking occaſion to quote that paſſage of Cato,

O, think what anxious moments paſs between
The birth of plots, and their laſt fatal periods!
Oh, 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
Fill'd up with horror all, and big with death!

obſerves "that Mr. Addiſon was ſo ſtruck "and affected with the *terrible graces* of "Shakeſpeare (in the paſſage he is there "conſidering), that, inſtead of imitating his "author's ſentiments, he hath, before he "was aware, given us only the copy of his "own impreſſions made by them. For,

Oh, 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
Fill'd up with horror all, and big with death,

"are but the affections raiſed by ſuch for-"cible images as theſe,

—All the Int'rim is
Like a Phantaſma, or a hideous dream
—The ſtate of man,
Like to a little Kingdom, ſuffers then
The nature of an Inſurrection."

The

The obſervation is new and finely applied. Give me leave to ſuppoſe that the following is an inſtance of the ſame nature.

2. Milton on a certain occaſion ſays of *Death*, that ſhe

"Grinn'd horrible a ghaſtly ſmile"—
P. L. B. II. ver. 846.

This repreſentation is ſuppoſed by his learned Editor to be taken from Homer, from Statius, or from the Italian poets. A certain friend of ours, not to be named without honour, and therefore not at all on ſo ſlight an occaſion, ſuggeſts that it might probably be copied from Spenſer's,

Grinning grieſly— B. V. c. 12.

and there is the more likelihood in this conjecture, as the poet a little before had called *death—the grieſly terror*— ver. 704. But after all, if he had any preceding writer in view, I ſuſpect it might be FLETCHER; who, in his *Wife for a Month*, has theſe remarkable lines,

The

The game of Death was never play'd more nobly,
The meagre thief grew *wanton* in his miſchiefs,
And *his ſhrunk hollow eyes ſmil'd* on his ruin.

The word *Ghaſtly*, I would obſerve, gives the preciſe idea of *ſhrunk hollow eyes*, and looks as if Milton, in admiration of his original, had only looked out for an *epithet* to Death's ſmile, as he found it pictured in Fletcher.

THUS MUCH then may perhaps ſerve for an illuſtration of the firſt part of this Inquiry. We have found out ſeveral *marks*, and applied them to various paſſages in the beſt writers, from which we may reaſonably enough be allowed to infer an Imitation in point of *Sentiment*. For what reſpects the other part of *Expreſſion*, this is an eaſier taſk, and will be diſpatched in few words.

Only you will indulge me in an obſervation or two, to prevent your expecting from me more than I undertake to perform.

When I ſpeak of *Expreſſion*, then I mean to confine myſelf "to ſingle words or ſen-"tences, or at moſt the ſtructure of a paſ-"ſage." When *Imitation* is carried ſo far

as

as to affect the general caſt of language, or what we call a *Style*, no great ſagacity is perhaps required to detect it. Thus the *Ciceroniani*, if they were not ambitious of proclaiming themſelves, are diſcoverable at the firſt glance. And the later Roman poets, as well as the modern Latin verſifiers, are to the beſt of their power *Virgilian*. The thing is perhaps ſtill eaſier in a living language; eſpecially if that language be our own. Milton and Pope, if they have made but few poets, have made many imitators; ſo many, that we are ready to complain there is hardly an original poet left.

Another point ſeems of no importance in the preſent inquiry. I know it is aſked, How far a writer caſually or deſignedly imitates? that is, whether he copies another from memory only, without recollecting at the time the paſſage from which his expreſſion is drawn; or purpoſely, and with full knowledge of his original. And this conſideration is of much weight, as I have ſhewn at large, where the queſtion is concerning the *credit* of the ſuppoſed imitator. For this is affected by nothing but direct and *intended*

tended imitation. But as we are looking at preſent only for thoſe marks in the expreſſion which ſhew it *not* to be original, it is enough that the reſemblance is ſuch as cannot well be accounted for but on the ſuppoſition of ſome ſort of commerce; whether immediately perceived by the writer himſelf, is not material. It is true, this obſervation is applicable to *ſentiments* as well as expreſſion; and I have not pretended to give the preceding articles as proofs, or even preſumptions, in all caſes, that the later writer copied intentionally from a former. But there is this difference in the two caſes. *Sentiments* may be ſtrikingly ſimilar, or even identical, without the leaſt thought, or even effect, of a preceding original. But the identity of *expreſſion*, except in ſome few caſes of no importance, is, in the ſame language, where the writer ſpeaks entirely from himſelf, an almoſt impoſſible thing. And you will be of this mind, if you reflect on the infinitely varied lights in which the ſame image or ſentiment preſents itſelf to different writers; the infinitely-varied purpoſe they have to ſerve by it; or where it happens

happens to ſtrike preciſely in the ſame manner, and is directed preciſely to the ſame end, the infinite combinations of words in which it may be expreſſed. To all which you may add, that the leaſt imaginable variation, either in the terms or the ſtructure of them, not only deſtroys the identity, but often diſfigures the reſemblance to that degree that we hardly know it to be a reſemblance.

So that, you ſee, the *marks* of imitated or, if you will, *derived expreſſion* are much leſs equivocal, than of *ſentiment*. We may pronounce of the *former* without heſitation, that it is taken, when correſponding marks in the *latter* would only authorize us to conclude that it was the *ſame*, or perhaps *ſimilar*.

I need not uſe more words to convince you, that the diſtinction of *caſual* and *deſigned* imitation is ſtill of leſs ſignificancy in this claſs of imitations, than the other.

And with this preamble, more particular perhaps and circumſtantial than was neceſſary, I now proceed to lay before you ſome of thoſe *ſigns* of derived expreſſion, which

I conceive to be *unequivocal*. If they are ſo, they will generally appear at firſt ſight; ſo that I ſhall have little occaſion to trouble you, as I did before, with my comments. It will be ſufficient to deliver the *rule*, and to *exemplify* it.

I. An identity of expreſſion, eſpecially if carried on through an intire ſentence, is the moſt certain proof of imitation.

Mr. Waller of Sachariſſa,

So little care of what is done below
Hath the bright dame, whom heav'n affecteth ſo;
Paints her, 'tis true, with the ſame hand which ſpreads
Like glorious colours thro' the flow'ry meads;
When laviſh nature with her beſt attire
Cloaths the gay ſpring, the ſeaſon of deſire.

Mr. Fenton takes notice that the poet is copying from the *Muiopotmos* of Spenſer,

To the gay gardens his unſtaid deſire
Him wholly carried, to refreſh his ſprights:
There laviſh Nature, in her beſt attire,
Pours forth ſweet odours and alluring ſights.

We

We ſhall ſee preſently that, beſides the identity of expreſſion, there is alſo another mark of imitation in this paſſage.

II. But leſs than this will do, where the ſimilarity of thought, and application of it, is ſtriking.

Mr. Pope ſays divinely well,

Shall burning Ætna, if a ſage requires,
Forget to thunder, and recall its fires?
On *air* or ſea *new motions be impreſs'd*,
Oh, blameleſs Bethel! to relieve thy breaſt?
When the looſe mountain trembles from on high,
Shall *gravitation ceaſe, if you go by?*
Or ſome old temple, nodding to its fall,
For Chartres' head reſerve the hanging wall?
Eſſay IV. ver. 123.

Now turn to Mr. Wollaſton, an eaſy natural writer (where his natural manner is not ſtiffened by a mathematical pedantry), and abounding in fine ſallies of the imagination; and ſee if the poet did not catch his *expreſſion*, as well as the fire of his conception in this place, from the philoſopher:

"As

"As to the courſe of Nature, if a good man be paſſing by an infirm building, juſt in the article of falling, can it be expected that God ſhould *ſuſpend the force of gravitation till he is gone by*, in order to his deliverance; or can we think it would be increaſed, and the fall haſtened, if a bad man was there, only that he might be caught, cruſhed, and made an example? If a man's ſafety or proſperity ſhould depend upon winds or rains, muſt *new motions be impreſſed upon the atmoſphere*, and new directions given to the floating parts of it, by ſome extraordinary and new influence from God?"

III. Sometimes the original expreſſion is not taken but paraphraſed; and the writer diſguiſes himſelf in a kind of circumlocution. Yet this artifice does not conceal him, eſpecially if ſome fragments, as it were, of the inventor's phraſe are found diſperſedly in the imitation.

For in the ſecret of her troubled thought
A doubtful combat love and honour fought.
Fairfax's Taſſo, B. IV. S. 70.

Hence Mr. Waller,

There public care and private paſſion *fought*
A doubtful combat in his noble *thought*.

Poems, p. 14.

Public care is the periphraſis of *honour*; and *private paſſion*, of *love*. For the reſt you ſee—*diſjecti membra poetæ*.

IV. An imitation is diſcoverable, when there is but the leaſt particle of the original expreſſion, "by a peculiar and no very natural arrangement of words."

In Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdeſs*, the ſpeaker ſays,

—In thy face
Shines more awful majeſty,
Than dull weak mortality
Dare with miſty eyes behold,
AND LIVE—

The writer glanced, but very improperly on ſuch an occaſion, at *Exod.* xxxiii. 20. "Thou canſt not ſee my face: for there "ſhall no man ſee me, *and live*."

V. An uncommon *conſtruction* of words, not identical, eſpecially if the ſubject be the ſame,

ſame, or the ideas ſimilar, will look like imitation.

Milton ſays finely of the *Swan*,

—The Swan with arched neck
Between her white wings mantling proudly ROWS
HER STATE —

I ſhould think he might probably have that line of Fletcher in his head,

How like a Swan ſhe SWIMS HER PACE!

The expreſſion, you ſee, is very like. It is true, the *image* in Milton is much nobler. It is taken from a barge of ſtate in a public proceſſion.

VI. We may even pronounce that a *ſingle word* is taken, when it is new and uncommon.

Milton's calling a ray of light—a levell'd *rule*, in Comus ver. 340, is ſo particular that, when one reads in Euripides, ἡλίȣ ΚΑΝΩΝ σαφὴς, Suppl. ver. 650, one has no doubt that the learned poet tranſlated the Greek word.

Again, Mr. Pope's,

"Or raviſh'd with the *whiſtling* of a name,"

is for the ſame reaſon, if there were no other points of likeneſs, copied from Mr. Cowley's

"Charm'd with the fooliſh *whiſtlings* of a name."
Tranſl. of Virgil's, *O! fortunati nimium*, &c.

VII. An improper *uſe* of uncommon expreſſion, in very exact writers, will ſometimes create a ſuſpicion. Milton had called the *ſight* indifferently *viſual nerve* and *viſual ray*, P. L. iii. 620. xi. 415. Mr. Pope, in his Meſſiah, thought he might take the ſame liberty, but forgot that though the *viſual nerve* might be purged from film, the *viſual ray* could not. Had Mr. Pope *invented* this bold expreſſion, he would have ſeen to apply his *metaphor* more properly.

VIII. Where the word or phraſe is *foreign*, there is, if poſſible, ſtill leſs doubt.

—at laſt his ſail-broad *vans*
He ſpreads for flight. Milton, P. L. ii. 927.

Moſt

Moſt certainly from Taſſo's,

—Spiega al grand volo i *vanni.* ix.

And that of Jonſon, in his *Sejanus,*

Oh! what is it proud ſlime will not believe
Of his own worth, to hear it *equal prais'd*
Thus with the Gods — A. 1

from Juvenal's

—nihil eſt quod credere de ſe
Non poſſit, cum *laudatur Diis æqua* poteſtas.

IX. Conclude the ſame when the expreſſion is *antique,* in the writer's own language.

In Mr. Waller's Panegyric on the Protector,

So, when a Lion ſhakes his dreadful mane,
And angry grows, if he, *that firſt took pain*
To tame his youth, approach the haughty beaſt,
He bends to him, but frights away the reſt.

The antique formality of the phraſe, *that firſt took pain,* for, *that firſt took the pains,* in ſo pure and modern a ſpeaker as this poet, looks ſuſpicious. He took it as he

found it in an older writer. There are many other marks of imitation; but we had needed no more than this to make the diſcovery:

So, when a lion ſhakes his dreadful mane,
And beats his tail, with courage proud, and wroth,
If his commander come, *who firſt took pain*
To tame his youth, his lofty creſt down go'th.
Fairfax's *Taſſo*, B. VIII. S. 83.

X. You obſerve in moſt of the inſtances here given, beſides other marks, there is an identity of rhyme. And this circumſtance of itſelf, in our poetry, is no bad argument of imitation, particularly when joined to a ſimilarity of expreſſion. And the reaſon is, the rhyme itſelf very naturally brings the expreſſion along with it.

1. "Stuck o'er with titles, and hung round with ſtrings,
That thou may'ſt be *by Kings, or whores of Kings.*"
Eſſay on Man, Ep. IV. 205.

from Mr. Cowley, in his tranſlation of *Hor.* I. *ep.* 10.

"To

" To Kings, or to the favourites of Kings.

2. Such is the world's great harmony, that *ſprings*
From order, union, full *conſent of things.*
Ep. III. 295.

from Denham's *Cowper's Hill,*

" Wiſely ſhe knew the *harmony of things,*
As well as that of ſounds, from diſcord *ſprings.*"

3. " Far as the ſolar walk, or milky way."
Eſſay on Man, Ep. I. 102.

from Mr. Dryden's Pindaric Poem to the memory of K. Charles II.

" Out of the ſolar walk, or heav'n's high way—"

though, theſe conſonancies chyming in the writer's head, he might not always be aware of the imitation.

XI. In the examples juſt given, there was no reaſon to ſuſpect the poet was imitating, till you met with the original. Then indeed the rhyme leads to the diſcovery. But " if an exact writer falls into a *flatneſs of expreſſion* for the ſake of rhyme, you

may even previouſly conclude that he has ſome precedent for it."

In the famous lines

Let modeſt Foſter, if he will, excell
Ten metropolitans *in preaching well.*
Ep. to Satires, ver. 131.

I uſed to ſuſpect, that the phraſe of *preaching well*, ſo unlike the conciſe accuracy of Pope, would not have been hazarded by him, if ſome eminent writer, though perhaps of an older age and leſs correct taſte than his own, had not ſet the example. But I had no doubt left, when I happened on the following couplet in Mr. Waller:

Your's ſound aloud, and tell us you *excell*
No leſs in courage, than *in ſinging well.*
Poem to Sir W. D'Avenant.

Our great poet is more happy in the application of theſe rhymes on another occaſion:

Let ſuch teach others, who themſelves *excell*,
And cenſure freely, who have written *well.*
Eſſay on Crit, ver. 15.

The

The reaſon is apparent. But here he glanced at the Duke of Buckingham's,

"Nature's chief maſter-piece is *writing well.*"

XII. "The ſame pauſe and turn of expreſſion are pretty ſure ſymptoms of imitation." Theſe minute reſemblances do not uſually ſpring from Nature, which, when the ſentiment is the ſame, hath a hundred ways of its own of giving it to us.

1. That noble verſe in the Eſſay on Criticiſm, ver. 625,

"For fools ruſh in, where angels dare not tread,"

is certainly faſhion'd upon Shakeſpeare's,

—"the world is grown ſo bad,
"That wrens make prey, where angels dare not perch." *Rich.* III. A. 1. S. III.

2. The verſes to Sir W. Trumbal, in Paſt. 1.

"And carrying with you all the world can boaſt
To all the world illuſtriouſly are loſt."

from Waller's *Maid's Tragedy* altered,

Happy

Happy is he that from the world retires,
And carries with him what the world admires.
p. 215, Lond. 1712.

XIII. When to these marks the same *Rhyme* is added, the case is still more evident.

"Men would be angels, angels would be Gods."
Essay on Man, Ep. I. 126.

without all question, from Sir Fulk Grevil,

Men would be tyrants, tyrants would be *Gods*.
Works, Lond. 1633, p. 73.

XIV. The seeming quaintness and obscurity of an expression frequently indicates imitation. As when in Fletcher's *Pilgrim* we read,

"*Hummings* of higher nature vex his brains."
A. II. S. 2.

Had the idea been original, the poet had expressed it more plainly. In leaving it thus, he pays his reader the compliment to suppose, that he will readily call to mind,

aliena negotia centum
Per caput, et circa saliunt latus;

which sufficiently explains it: as we may see from Mr. Cowley's application of the same

ſame paſſage: "Aliena negotia centum "per caput et centum ſaliunt latus. A "hundred buſineſſes of other men fly con- "tinually about his head and *ears*, and "ſtrike him in the face like Dorres." *Diſc. of Liberty.* And ſtill more clearly from Mr. Pope's,

"A hundred other men's affairs,
"Like bees, are *humming* in my ears."

Learned writers of quick parts abound in theſe delicate alluſions. It makes a principal part of modern elegancy to glance in this oblique manner at well-known paſſages in the claſſics.

XV. I will trouble you with but one more note of *imitated expreſſion*, and it ſhall be the very reverſe of the laſt. When the paſſages glanced at are not familiar, the expreſſion is frequently minute and circumſtantial, correſponding to the original in the order, turn, and almoſt number of the words. The reaſons are, that, the imitated paſſage not being known, the imitator may give it, as he finds it, with ſafety, or at leaſt without offence; and that, beſides,

beſides, the force and beauty of it would eſcape us in a brief and general alluſion. The following are inſtances:

1. "Man never is, but always to be bleſt."
Eſſay on Man, Ep. I. ver. 69.

from Manilius,

Victuros agimus ſemper, nec vivimus unquam.

2. —"Hope never comes,
"That comes to all."—
MILTON, P. L. I. ver. 66.

from Euripdes in the Troad. ver. 676.

—ἐλπὶς δ', ἣ πᾶσι λείπεται βροτοῖς,
Ξύνεσιν ἐλπὶς.—

3. But above all, that in Jonſon's Catiline,

"He ſhall die:
"*Shall* was too ſlowly ſaid: He's *dying:* That
"Is ſtill too ſlow: He's *dead.*"

from Seneca's *Hercules furens*, A. III.

"Lycus Creonti debitas poenas *dabit:*
"Lentum eſt, dabit; *dat:* hoc quoque eſt
"lentum; *dedit.*"

You have now, Sir, before you a ſpecimen of thoſe rules, which I have fancied might be fairly applied to the diſcovery of imitations, both in regard to the SENSE and

EXPRESSION of great writers. I would not pretend that the ſame ſtreſs is to be laid on *all*; but there may be ſomething, at leaſt, worth attending to in every one of them. It were eaſy, perhaps, to enumerate ſtill more, and to illuſtrate theſe I have given with more agreeable citations. Yet I have ſpared you the diſguſt of conſidering thoſe vulgar paſſages, which every body recollects and ſets down for acknowledged imitations. And theſe I have uſed are taken from the moſt celebrated of the antient and modern writers. You may obſerve indeed that I have chiefly drawn from our own poets; which I did, not merely becauſe I know you deſpiſe the pedantry of confining one's ſelf to learned quotations, but becauſe I think we are better able to diſcern thoſe circumſtances, which betray an imitation, in our own language than in any other. Amongſt other reaſons, an *identity* of words and phraſes, upon which ſo much depends, eſpecially in the article of *expreſſion*, is only to be had in the *ſame* language. And you are not to be told with how much more

certainty

certainty we determine of the degree of evidence, which ſuch identity affords for this purpoſe, in a language we ſpeak, than in one which we only liſp or ſpell.

But you will beſt underſtand of what importance this affair of *expreſſion* is to the diſcovery of imitations, by conſidering how ſeldom we are able to fix an imitation on Shakeſpeare. The reaſon is, not that there are not numberleſs paſſages in him very like to others in approved authors, or that he had not read enough to give us a fair hold of him; but that his expreſſion is ſo totally his own, that he almoſt always ſets us at defiance.

You will aſk me, perhaps, now I am on this ſubject, how it happened that Shakeſpeare's language is every where ſo much his own as to ſecure his imitations, if they were ſuch, from diſcovery, when I pronounce with ſuch aſſurance of thoſe of our other poets? The anſwer is given for me in the Preface to Mr. Theobald's Shakeſpeare; though the obſervation, I think, is too good to come from that critic. It is, that, though his words, agreeably to the

ſtate of the Engliſh tongue at that time, be generally Latin, his phraſeology is perfectly Engliſh: an advantage, he owed to his ſlender acquaintance with the Latin idiom. Whereas the other writers of his age, and ſuch others of an older date as were likely to fall into his hands, had not only the moſt familiar acquaintance with the Latin idiom, but affected on all occaſions to make uſe of it. Hence it comes to paſs, that, though he might draw ſometimes from the Latin (Ben Jonſon, you know, tells us, *He had leſs Greek*) and the learned Engliſh writers, he takes nothing but the *ſentiment*; the expreſſion comes of itſelf, and is purely Engliſh.

I might indulge in other reflexions, and detain you ſtill further with examples taken from his works. But we have *lain*, as the Poet ſpeaks, *on theſe primroſe beds*, too long. It is time that you now riſe to your own nobler *inventions*; and that I return myſelf to thoſe, leſs pleaſing, perhaps, but more uſeful ſtudies, from which your friendly ſollicitations have called me. Such as theſe amuſements are, however, I cannot

repent

repent me of them, ſince they have been innocent at leaſt, and even ingenuous; and, what I am fondeſt to recollect, have helped to enliven thoſe many years of friendſhip we have paſſed together in this place. I ſee indeed, with regret, the approach of that time, which threatens to take me both from *it* and *you*. But, however fortune may diſpoſe of me, ſhe cannot throw me to a diſtance, to which your affection and good wiſhes, at leaſt, will not follow me.

And for the reſt,

"Be no unpleaſing melancholy mine."

The coming years of my life will not, I foreſee, in many reſpects, be what the paſt have been to me. But, till they take me from myſelf, I muſt always bear about me the agreeable remembrance of our friendſhip.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your moſt affectionate

Friend and Servant.

CAMBRIDGE,
Aug. 15, 1757.

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